

**190  
PRODUCTS  
REVIEWED!**

FEBRUARY 2014  
choice.com.au

# choice

## **LEAN CUISINE**

How to choose  
healthier takeaway

## **THE HIGH PRICE OF CLOTHING**

Who really makes  
your threads?

## **SLICE OF HEAVEN?**

We find the best-tasting  
frozen pizzas

## **HAPPY FEET**

Choosing the  
right runners

## **TESTS**

Steam mops  
Dishwashing liquids  
Action cameras  
Microwaves  
Coffee machines  
Induction cookware  
Electric bikes  
Paper shredders  
DVRs



# **GRAND THEFT AUTO**

The great smart key rip-off

# We're watching you

Big changes for consumers are afoot in 2014 – and we'll be keeping a close eye on them

One of the great things about Australia is our commitment to making the most of summer, which means the country pretty much shuts down for the month of January. February, however, signals a return to the grindstone – and this is as true for our system of government as it is for the rest of the community.

CHOICE expects to see the new federal government's agenda really take shape in the next few months. And from the early signs, big changes are on the horizon for consumers.

Some of these changes will flow from a major review of competition laws – the successor to the landmark review completed by Fred Hilmer in 1993. This process is important because the changes should mean consumers are less likely to be ripped off in competitive markets. The Hilmer review, which was largely adopted by the federal and state and territory governments, changed Australia for the better, with the establishment of the ACCC and the *Trade Practices Act* being extended to cover all commercial practices.

The new review will look at whether our competition laws have kept pace with

massive changes in technology and global markets in the past 20 years. It will examine whether these laws are still up to the task of ensuring that markets for essential goods and services, such as groceries, fuel and utilities, are genuinely competitive.

The government has also made clear it wants the competition inquiry to look beyond traditional competition issues. It will, for example, examine what needs to change in order to allow Australian consumers to buy goods and services at internationally competitive prices. This will allow us to highlight our work on what we call the "Australia tax" – the price discrimination that means we pay significantly more for many goods and services than people in other countries.

The inquiry will also consider whether more markets should be opened up to parallel imports, allowing importers to get around the inflated prices that multinationals set for goods shipped to Australia.

Along with the competition review, another major inquiry will examine the Australian financial system, which will allow us to highlight the difficulties many consumers face when trying to choose the best mortgage or credit card.



The issue that's likely to dominate national debate for the next six months, however, is the government's commitment to abolish the carbon tax. When the tax was introduced, there was no shortage of business groups lining up to use it as an excuse for increased prices. But now it looks set to be abolished, they're falling over each other to warn that we should not expect prices to drop.

We'll be watching this very carefully, ready to refer any shonky claims to the ACCC.

**Alan Kirkland, CEO**  
Email: [alan@choice.com.au](mailto:alan@choice.com.au)  
Twitter: @AlanKirkland

For general membership & consumer enquiries, phone 1800 069 552

## CHOICE

CHOICE gives you the power to choose the best goods and services, and avoid the worst. We pay full price for the products we test, so remain 100% independent. We don't take advertising or freebies from industry. We're not a government body and our consumer publishing and advocacy is almost entirely funded by subscriptions to our magazines, [choice.com.au](http://choice.com.au) and from other services we supply to benefit members and consumers. CHOICE product ratings are based on lab tests, expert assessments and

consumer surveys. CHOICE staff also research a wide range of consumer services. They reveal the truth behind the facts and figures, and investigate the quality and the claims. **SUBSCRIBE** To review the full range of membership benefits available to you, go to [choice.com.au/signup](http://choice.com.au/signup) and compare all our options for providing you access to our premium content across our website, mobile, tablet and print products. **SUBSCRIPTIONS/RENEWALS** Call 1800 069 552 or email us at [ausconsumer@choice.com.au](mailto:ausconsumer@choice.com.au)



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Who owns your favourite beer? You might be unpleasantly surprised to find out on page 28





## BREAKING NEWS

### Not appy

**A**pple has agreed to refund US customers a total of at least US\$32.5m for purchases made by children in its App Store without parental consent, after the Federal Trade Commission acted on tens of thousands of complaints about in-app purchases. CHOICE raised the alarm about in-app purchases back in 2011, when we handed a Shonky to “free” game app Smurf Village. There’s no word on whether Apple will do the same in Australia, but the ACCC is investigating.

### Shonky solar

**S**olar companies Euro Solar and Worldwide Energy and Manufacturing Pty Ltd (WEMA, formerly trading as Australian Solar Panel) have been ordered to pay penalties totalling \$145,000 after falsely claiming their Chinese-made panels were made in Australia and posting fake testimonials on their websites as well as on YouTube. The case is the ACCC’s first successful litigation under the prohibition of fake testimonials under the Australian Consumer Law.

### Fresh appeal

Life-sized cut-outs of a doctor and nurse with a health slogan placed next to the fruit and veg in a UK supermarket helped lift sales of fruit, but not veggies, over a 15-week period, a study has found. Fresh fruit sales rose by 20% and frozen nearly 30%.

## ► I SAY

### Another Optus fail? Yes

**I** come from Europe and my partner is from the US, so we rely on phone and Skype to stay in touch with family and friends. We also both work from home, and as a result we’re heavy internet users. So when our phone service failed, shortly before the holiday season we needed help fast.

Unfortunately, such help was not forthcoming. After I waited hours on hold, the Optus customer service agent told me the fault was with the Telstra line, and that it could take five days for a Telstra technician to come around. When I complained, a supervisor promised Optus would pay for a \$49 wireless modem, a \$30 SIM card and \$30 for forwarded calls to my mobile to tide me over. All I had to do, she said, was drop into one of two Optus shops close to our home.

So off I trudged to the first shop the next morning, only to find it was out of business. So was the second one. I went out of my way to a third shop, where the modem was \$30 more expensive than I had been told it would be. The helpful shop assistant called Optus asking whether I could get the more expensive modem. She was told I could, but only after she spent more than an hour on the phone with one customer service officer who hung up on her, and a second who was so inadequate, she told me she would personally make an official complaint about her. Then, when he finally

arrived, the Telstra technician discovered the fault was with Optus; Optus told me it would take another six days for their technician to come by. To say I was upset is an understatement.

I complained to the Telecommunication Industry Ombudsman (TIO), and in response Optus offered me an additional \$85 refund.

About two weeks later, all was fixed and I was starting to forget the incident. Then my bill arrived.

Lo and behold, the amount credited was far lower than I was entitled to. I tried to contact the Optus customer service agent, but when I hadn’t heard back a month later, I left a message on her voicemail saying I was very unhappy and about to lodge a second TIO complaint. Unsurprisingly, she rang back immediately and promised to sort it out.

I’m waiting with not-so-bated breath for my next bill.

**UTA MIHM**

After hours on hold, the Optus customer service agent told me the fault was with the Telstra line







## Free-range fix?

**I**n a major coup for consumers, CHOICE's super complaint on shonky egg claims has resulted in NSW Fair Trading saying it will push for a national standard that will for the first time provide an enforceable free-range definition, bringing an end to the current free-range farce.

CHOICE presented evidence to NSW Fair Trading that dodgy free-range egg claims are leading to major rip-offs, with products labelled "free-range" costing up to twice as much as cage eggs, despite the wide variation in how they are produced. And price is no indication of quality, the evidence showed.

In responding to the super complaint, NSW Fair Trading recognised the potential for consumers to be misled. It recommended the development of a binding national information standard under the Australian Consumer Law that sets a clear definition of free-range and a minimum labelling requirement.

In other egg news, the ACCC has launched legal action against two egg producers, saying they misled consumers by suggesting the eggs were produced in free-range conditions when in fact the hens weren't able to move around freely on the outdoor ranges.

ANGELA CARTWRIGHT

## Ignorance ain't bliss

**N**SW Fair Trading has emphasised that consumers should be wary of extended warranties, following a CHOICE investigation into electronics retailers (CHOICE, Dec 13/Jan 14) that found 85% of sales staff got it wrong when it came to consumer rights.

"Consumers need to be aware their legal rights often outstrip what retailers are trying to sell in an extended warranty, and they could be buying an unnecessary warranty the ACL already provides," commissioner Rod Stowe said.

In a separate investigation by the ACCC, five Harvey Norman franchises have been ordered to pay fines totalling \$148,000 after in-store staff made false statements to consumers about their consumer guarantee rights.

JODI BIRD

## Off Target

**T**arget has settled litigation over its alleged sale of counterfeit MAC cosmetics in 2012 and will pay the company \$1m.

After expert testing of the products, Target has conceded it can't prove the products were legitimate. But the retailer also claims this is not an admission of guilt. "The testing required to prove if the products were authentic would have been both costly and time consuming, and so we have taken the commercially prudent decision to settle the matter," its spokesperson said.

MAC didn't supply products to Target. It's believed the retailer sourced its MAC products from two Australian importers who dealt with middlemen in the US.

Anyone who has bought MAC products from Target can return them for a refund.

JEMMA CASTLE

## Review you can bank on?

**T**he federal government has finalised the panel and terms of reference for a major inquiry into Australia's financial system. CHOICE welcomes the review, having successfully argued for a stronger focus on consumers in the final terms of reference.

The so-called "Son of Wallis" inquiry – a reference to the last review concluded in 1997 – was a key Coalition election commitment. The inquiry has been given a wide mandate to examine developments since 1997, and particularly since the GFC. Issues are likely to include the dominance of Australia's big four banks and how the level of regulation in the financial sector is balanced with concerns around competition and consumer protection.

Ex-CBA CEO David Murray will chair the business-heavy panel, made up of outgoing AMP CEO Craig Dunn, former investment banker Carolyn Hewson, finance professor Kevin Davis and businessman Dr Brian McNamee.

Initial submissions to the inquiry close in March, with an interim report due mid-year and a final report expected by November.

MATT LEVEY



## Hey, big boy!

**J**amie Oliver has lent his name to this portable kettle-style charcoal barbecue. We put it to our usual tests to see if it can turn you into a celebrity chef – or at least a happy camper.

The Big Boy's 34cm grill surface is wide enough to take several steaks and sausages, and has a curved design that's intended to prevent food falling through. The barbecue is quick and easy to assemble. For fuel, hardwood charcoal is recommended, and it's suggested you use lighter fluid to get it lit. That didn't work well for us, so we used lighter gel. Lighter fluid can be dangerous and leave an unpleasant residue on the food, so we recommend avoiding this.

Charcoal cooking takes some practice, especially in getting it lit, and can produce more smoke than a gas barbecue. You need to preheat the barbecue beforehand (30 minutes or until the charcoal is almost grey), which makes overall cooking time slower than with a gas barbecue.

The barbecue is easy to use, with good access to the food and vents in the bottom and hood to regulate heat. It has no side panels and so is susceptible to wind and draughts when cooking without the hood – the coals are unlikely to go out but cooking may be slowed down. Position the barbecue in a safe, level place before lighting it and

### JAMIE OLIVER BIG BOY BARBECUE

**PRICE** \$60

**CONTACT** woolworthsonline.com.au (Note: at time of publication, the BBQ was currently sold out but may be found in other online stores)



**FIRST LOOK**

be careful around it, as the exterior gets hot. We found it's also easy to clean.

### CHOICE verdict

The Jamie Oliver Big Boy is a good, inexpensive barbecue for picnics, camping and even backyard cooking, provided you don't mind a smoky flavour or taking the little extra time that charcoal cooking needs. **CHRIS BARNES**

## Not like a virgin

**M**ore than three-quarters of imported olive oils don't meet the Australian standard for olive oils and are labelled incorrectly. And 93% of the imported brands miss the mark for at least one product in their range, The Australian Olive Association (AOA) has found. The findings are consistent with a 2010 CHOICE investigation that found more than 50% of imported oils failed the extra virgin test.

In Australia, 90% of olive oil producers have signed a code of practice to ensure high quality; they carry a certification symbol on products. The AOA says local oil is not refined and that shorter transport times, optimal growing and storage conditions mean it's higher-quality oil than most imported products. **MIRANDA HERRON**



## Food labelling future fuzzy

**F**ood and health ministers have given their continuing support for the Health Star Rating Scheme, the front-of-pack nutrition labelling system CHOICE helped develop, even in the face of growing resistance by the Australian Food and Grocery Council.

The scheme has been designed with input from industry, public health and government bodies and was intended to be implemented by food companies on a voluntary basis in the first instance. However, the AFGC has indicated it wants to retain its flawed Daily Intake Guide approach.

CHOICE commissioned research in December 2013 that found 62% of consumers had either never heard of the Daily Intake Guide or rarely used it to choose products, even though it appears on thousands of products and has been around for more than seven years.

We believe the Health Star Rating Scheme would deliver a considerable improvement for consumers, enabling quick comparison between products and facilitating healthier choices.

**ANGELA CARTWRIGHT**



## Reviewing their behaviour

**T**he ACCC has released best-practice guidelines for online review sites amid concern paid and fake reviews are on the rise. The regulator recommends review sites have processes in place to detect and remove fake reviews and inform consumers when a reviewer has been paid by the site, but stops short of mandating such practices.

The ACCC also raised concerns about review results being manipulated because of commercial relationships between the review sites and the businesses being reviewed, a concern also raised by CHOICE in a recent investigation (see *CHOICE*, Nov 13). While voluntary, the guideline was

released with the warning that fines of up \$1.1m can be levied on review sites for misleading and deceptive conduct.

According to Sensis' 2013 *Yellow Social Media Report*, 74% of social media users read online reviews before making a purchase.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN



## Trading it away

**A**ustralia and South Korea have concluded a free trade agreement, which will include an investor state dispute settlement (ISDS) provision allowing South Korean investors to sue our governments. Trade Minister Andrew Robb says the provision was included in the deal in exchange for access to the South Korean market for our agricultural products.

CHOICE is against the inclusion of ISDS clauses in free trade agreements (see *CHOICE*, Dec 13/Jan 14 or [choice.com.au/tpp](http://choice.com.au/tpp)), as historically they've led to consumer harm. Robb says the agreement will contain public welfare, health and environment exclusions from the ISDS clause, meaning Australian governments could not be sued over health or environmental legislation. But such exclusions have been ineffective in the past, and we're concerned the exclusions may not offer a guarantee that policies in these areas will be protected from litigation. ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH

## Fibre highs

**A** high-fibre diet could reduce the severity of asthma, according to a study that looked at how mice on high- and low-fibre diets reacted to allergens. The authors found mice fed a high-fibre diet suffered less from allergic airway disease.

Why might fibre make a difference? "Dietary fibre alters the composition of bacteria in the gut," according to the study. "Once ingested, these bacteria process the fibre and release metabolites, called short-chain fatty acids, which enter the blood circulation and influence the development of immune cells elsewhere in the body, including those entering the lung."

The incidence of allergic asthma has increased in developing countries over several decades, while the consumption of dietary fibre has decreased, according to the study.

ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH

## An apple a day...

**I**f all UK adults over age 50 ate one apple a day it could prevent or delay about 8500 annual deaths from heart attacks and strokes, a UK study has found. The study also revealed similar reduction may occur if statins were taken by everyone over 50, but side effects would include 1200 excess cases of muscular disorders, and 12,300 diagnoses of diabetes.

MIRANDA HERRON



## Dishonourable diets

**C**rack out the boos for the worst diets of the new year, as voted by the Dietitians Association of Australia. High on the list of those to avoid are the lemon detox diet and the Ashy Bines Bikini Body Challenge, which CHOICE reviewed last year and found wanting (see *CHOICE*, Sept 13 or [choice.com.au/onlineidiets](http://choice.com.au/onlineidiets)). Neither diet is based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

KATE BROWNE



## Final word?

**L**egislators in the NT have taken steps to clear up longstanding confusion about the legality of advance care directives (ACDs) and say Territorians will now have their “personal decisions valued” when it comes to end-of-life treatment.

According to NT Attorney-General John Elferink, the Advance Personal Planning Bill recently passed in territory parliament establishes “clear principles” intended to ensure that healthcare decisions made in advance are honoured once the patient can no longer control their own fate. But the bill also allows people to leave an ACD outlining their “views, wishes and beliefs as the basis on which a person will make decisions on their behalf” and nominating someone to make decisions about finance and property issues.

A CHOICE investigation last year (*CHOICE*, Dec 12/Jan 13) found ACD legislation varies widely and isn’t transferable across state lines. The Australian Medical Association maintains doctors have the right to ignore them.

ANDY KOLLMORGEN

## Grain of truth

**C**onsumers will start seeing new wholegrain claims on food labels, after six of Australia’s grain food manufacturers signed up to the Grains & Legumes Nutrition Council’s (GLNC) voluntary code for wholegrain content claims. Goodman Fielder, Bakers Delight, Sanitarium, Woolworths, Tucker’s Natural and Cereal Partners Worldwide (Nestlé) have all signed on.

Launched in July, the code will allow products with eight or more grams of wholegrains to say “contains whole grain”; products with 16 grams or more to say “high in whole grain”; and products with 24 grams or more to claim “very high in whole grain”.

But the code is self-regulated and not enforceable through the Food Standards Code, meaning compliance isn’t mandatory.

The GLNC recommends consuming 48 grams of whole grains each day.

JEMMA CASTLE



## The scoop on Scooba

**R**obot vacuum cleaners are an increasingly popular solution to floor cleaning, although our testing finds they actually aren’t much good at cleaning carpet (see *CHOICE*, Jul 13). But what about floor washing?

The iRobot Scooba has a rotating brush, a water tank and cleaning solution, as well as a built-in squeegee/vacuum to suck up the dirty water (into a separate tank, so the used water doesn’t go back onto the floor). It works on most hard floors, such as tiles, linoleum and sealed hardwood, and like its Roomba vacuum-cleaner cousin, it automatically avoids stairs and drop-offs. It’s even claimed to remove up to 98% of common bacteria from floors. It’s not completely sentient, of course – you need to remove any clutter or rugs from the area to be cleaned.

The Scooba is easy to use. Charge it, fill the cleaning tank with water and the supplied cleaning solution, turn it on and press the “clean” button. Afterwards, empty the dirty water, rinse the tanks and clean the filter,

vacuum port, cleaning head and brush. It’s fairly noisy when running (70-74dB, about the same as a typical vacuum cleaner).

It’s supposed to pick up dust and grit as well as scrub the floor, so you don’t need to pre-vacuum. We put it to the test by sprinkling a modest amount of sand over a moderately dirty lino floor and letting it go to work.

While the Scooba did a decent job of scrubbing the lino – a paper towel wiped over the floor came up clean afterwards, and the water from the dirty-water tank was almost black – it was hopeless at picking up the sand. It only collected 30% of the grit and smeared the rest around the floor, leaving wet sandy patches, mainly around the edges and corners.

The floor remained wet for about 90 minutes after the test and looked very untidy.

### CHOICE verdict

While the iRobot Scooba is easy to use and can clean a dirty floor fairly well, for a proper clean you’ll need to first sweep or vacuum any grit or loose dirt. Used regularly it can keep a hard floor reasonably clean. If you have a lot of hard flooring that regularly gets grubby but not gritty, the Scooba could be a time-saver. But given its price and limitations, we aren’t convinced it’s a worthwhile buy for most households.

CHRIS BARNES

**FIRST  
LOOK**

### iROBOT SCOOBA FLOOR WASHING ROBOT 390

PRICE \$989

CONTACT [irobot.com.au](http://irobot.com.au)



## Oz on slow-down

**G**lobal average internet connection speeds increased nine per cent in the year to June 2013, with the Netherlands, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Japan, Latvia and South Korea's average connection speeds all above 10 megabytes per second (Mbps). This was more than double Australia's average connection speed of 4.8Mbps, with only five per cent of Aussies experiencing connection speeds above 10Mbps.

Despite our slow connections, however, 1.2 million Aussies have abandoned live broadcast TV altogether, getting their viewing fix online instead. Roy Morgan Research found more than half of Australians now watch TV, video and movies on the internet via catch-up services such as iView, or downloaded

or streamed content from YouTube, iTunes and other services.

JODI BIRD

## Sweet as!

**A**re-evaluation of the controversial artificial sweetener aspartame by the European Commission has found the current acceptable daily intake levels are safe for the general community.

The assessment concluded that except in cases of people suffering from the condition phenylketonuria, aspartame doesn't harm the brain or nervous system in adults, nor pose a risk during pregnancy. Australia has the same maximum daily intake level as the EU of 40mg/kg of body weight per day. **MIRANDA HERRON**

## On the up

**H**ealth insurance fees will increase by an average of 6.2% this year, the highest increase since 2005. Fee increases vary by insurer, policy and state: NIB tops the list with an average fee hike of 7.99%, while HIF has the lowest increase with 2.98%. The two largest insurers posted cost increases above the average, with 6.35% for Bupa and 6.49% for Medibank. Fee increases usually come into effect on 1 April 2014.

Stay tuned for our report on how to make the most out of your extras insurance in *CHOICE* Mar 14 and our updated best buys in *CHOICE* Jun 14. In the meantime, please contact us with your health insurance experiences at [money@choice.com.au](mailto:money@choice.com.au)

UTA MIHM

## Trolls yelp

**A**n American court has ruled online review site Yelp must release the identities of seven of their anonymous reviewers, after a carpet cleaner, Hadeed Carpet Cleaning, took them to court for the information in order to then sue the reviewers for defamation.

The case, which has implications for the country's constitutional right to freedom of speech, could open the floodgates for defamation lawsuits against trolls (people who intentionally leave inflammatory comments on websites).

ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH

## News to digest

**A** new certification is now available in Australia for low-FODMAP foods. FODMAPS (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols) are a group of sugars that are poorly absorbed by some people and can cause symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome. The certification group estimates 35% of Australians have an intolerance to one or more of these sugars. The FODMAP-friendly logo is designed so consumers can identify products suitable for a low-FODMAP diet. Foods containing FODMAPs include apples, onions, milk, legumes and honey.

MIRANDA HERRON

## Lowest colluded airfares guaranteed

**F**light Centre has been found guilty of attempting to persuade Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines and Emirates to stop offering airfares at lower prices than those offered by the travel agent itself. The Federal Court found that on six different occasions between 2005 and 2009, Flight Centre attempted to enter into arrangements with the airlines so it would not lose money on its "lowest airfare guarantee", which promises to beat competitors' airfares.

JODI BIRD

# choice MEMBERS NOTICEBOARD



**Introducing Tina Namow, a retired social worker and narrative family therapist who is involved in the Central Adelaide Local Health Network as a consumer advocate and is a member of many social justice groups, including**

**the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She has been married for 30 years and has one son, who was married on New Year's Eve last year.**

**What section of CHOICE do you look at first?**

I've always loved reading CHOICE and CHOICE Health Reader. I read both magazines from cover to cover.

**Have you made any CHOICE recommended purchases?**

Everything I buy, including whitegoods, bedding and anything that's expensive, I check with CHOICE first. I've never been disappointed by any of your recommended purchases.

**Do you recommend products to family and friends?**

All my friends who visit always glance through my pile of CHOICE magazines when they stay with us. I do encourage them to join up.

**What products would you like to see CHOICE put to the test?**

I'd like to see CHOICE do some research on just how much palliative care can really offer a dying person and people's views on voluntary euthanasia. I've found many people of my generation want to have more choices in how we live and end our lives. It would be interesting to see what you come up with.

**What I tell my friends about CHOICE:**

When my husband and I drove around Australia and worked in every state, I had my CHOICE magazines redirected through Australia Post to each place we were living. I looked so forward to it. We left Adelaide in 2006, and after completing our trip around Australia we returned in November 2010.

## Lab Tours

Our free member Lab Tours start this month, and we currently have limited places available throughout the year on Friday 21 February, Wednesday 9 April, Monday 23 June, Friday 22 August and Wednesday 15 October. You can view our 11 testing labs in action, chat with some of our testers and enjoy morning tea with CHOICE CEO Alan Kirkland. Log on to [choice.com.au/labtours](http://choice.com.au/labtours) for more or to make a booking.



## CHOICE guides are here to help you

Whether you're buying or renovating a home, raising kids or just trying to get the best deal on a new purchase, our CHOICE guides are filled with invaluable expert and unbiased advice to help you make the best choice for your needs.

The CHOICE guide series includes:

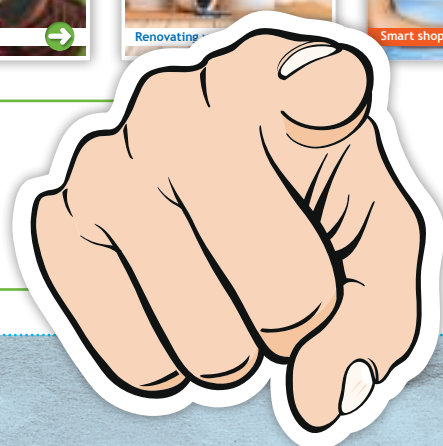
- Kids and nutrition
- Setting up your home
- Renovating your home
- Setting up your home entertainment system
- Expectant parents
- Smart shopping

Find out more and download your free guides today at [choice.com.au/about-us/member-noticeboard](http://choice.com.au/about-us/member-noticeboard)



## We want you!

Each month we profile a CHOICE member, asking about their experiences with CHOICE. We're calling for interested members to email us at [inthespotlight@choice.com.au](mailto:inthespotlight@choice.com.au) Are you our next Member in the Spotlight?







## Dirty laundry

**C**olgate, Cussons and Unilever have been accused of forming a cartel to avoid passing on cost savings from their ultra-concentrate detergents to consumers. The ACCC says the manufacturers of detergent brands such as Cold Power, Radiant and Omo formed an agreement to move to low-cost ultra-concentrates in 2009 but sell them at the same price as higher-cost standard concentrates.

Woolworths are alleged to have played a key role in organising the changeover to ultra-concentrates by facilitating the sharing of information about when they would increase the price of their detergents.

"Ultra-concentrate detergents are cheaper to produce, store and transport," said ACCC chair Rod Sims. "By way of contrast, when similar products were launched in New Zealand, there was significant discounting."

Omo and Colgate-Palmolive both have CHOICE Recommended licences for laundry detergent. These are only available to products that make our What to Buy list and were taken prior to the results of the ACCC's investigation. Unilever (manufacturer of Omo) wrote to us in December 2013 outlining their action as a result of the findings, however we're yet to hear from Colgate-Palmolive.

JODI BIRD

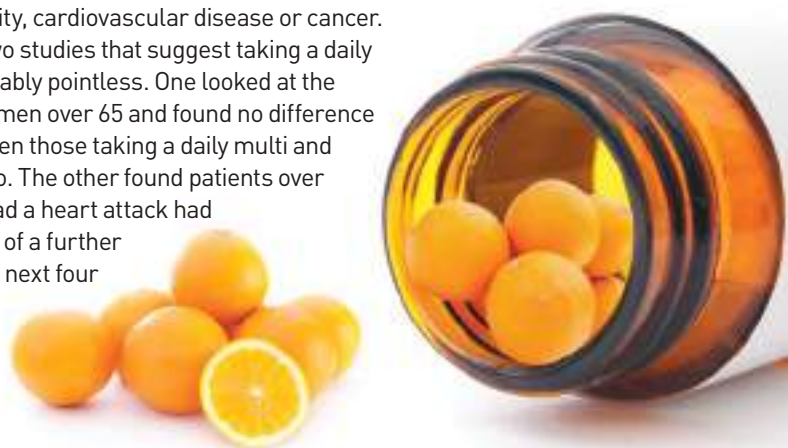
## Pointless popping

**S**upplementing the diet of well-nourished adults with (most) mineral or vitamin supplements has no clear benefit. That's the conclusion of doctors from John Hopkins Medical Institutions in the US and the University of Warwick in the UK, published in an editorial in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The same journal issue includes a review of trial evidence of the role of vitamin supplementation in preventing chronic disease in adults with no nutritional deficiencies. There was no clear evidence of a beneficial effect of supplements on all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease or cancer.

It also includes two studies that suggest taking a daily multivitamin is probably pointless. One looked at the cognitive decline of men over 65 and found no difference over 12 years between those taking a daily multi and those taking placebo. The other found patients over 50 who'd recently had a heart attack had a similar probability of a further heart event over the next four years, regardless of whether or not they took a multivitamin.

JANE BARDELL



## Poor production

**T**he US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) wants to end the practice of giving animals antibiotics for "production purposes", such as rapid weight gain, due to the dangers associated with antibiotic resistance. The FDA has asked drug manufacturers to remove production uses from antibiotic labels within three years, after which it will review progress.

The potential for antibiotic overuse leading to bacterial resistance was recognised in Australia over a decade ago, with the government establishing the Joint Expert Technical Advisory Committee on Antibiotic Resistance in 1998. The committee was disbanded in 2002, despite criticism that many of its recommendations were left unimplemented.

ZOYA SHEFTALOVICH



## Fair ruling

**G**oogle's digitisation of more than 20 million books has been deemed "fair use" in a longstanding class action in the US courts.

Google Books lets users conduct full-text searches of books, and snippets are made available for viewing. Many of the digitised books are under copyright, and permission wasn't sought from rights holders. Users can't read complete copies of copyrighted books.

On considering the public benefits for education, research and the ability to preserve old books, as well as the exposure for authors to new audiences, presiding judge Justice Chin concluded that "all society benefits".

The Authors Guild, which filed the case in 2005, says it will appeal.

JEMMA CASTLE



## Toying with danger

Parents might want to cast a wary eye over any gifts their youngsters received for Christmas, following several recent product recalls of toys that were on sale in the lead-up to the holiday.

Three playthings have been recalled due to posing a choking hazard to children under 36 months. These include two plush bunnies that are at risk of spilling their stuffing, and a battery mobile phone toy that contains small parts. The Hoppity and Bumper Bunnies were for sale at Parenthood stores in Victoria from 1 October 2012 to 6 January 2014, while the Diego Super Telephone toy was sold in NSW.

Another toy in the spotlight is the Aldi Crane pool noodle, sold in Aldi stores across NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the ACT. It fails to carry the mandatory warning "aquatic toy – use only under supervision".

All the toys should be returned to the place of purchase for a refund. Visit [recalls.gov.au](http://recalls.gov.au) for further details.

SIOBANH DONOHUE

## Dodgy deals

Online voucher merchant Scoopon was slapped with a million-dollar fine late last year for overpromising and underdelivering to consumers and participating businesses, as part of the ACCC's ongoing pursuit of shady web-based trading activity.

The Federal Court found Scoopon misled consumers about refund rights and the price of goods advertised, and falsely told business there was no cost or risk involved in running a deal. Scoopon's promise that 30% of vouchers sold would not be redeemed was substantiated, the court held. ACCC chair Rod Sims acknowledged Scoopon's cooperation but said the penalty "serves as a warning to other businesses in the industry to improve their practices or face action from [us]".

ANDY KOLLMORGEN

## The great Australian nightmare

Australian mortgager RAMS is now offering a 120% mortgage, but unsurprisingly it comes with a catch: someone must put their own home on the line as your guarantor. They need to take out a mortgage for 125% of the difference between the loan and what your home is worth. If your home is worth \$400,000 and you take out a loan for \$480,000, they have to take out a mortgage for \$100,000.

"That is a recipe for disaster," says Katherine Lane, the principal solicitor

of the Consumer Credit Legal Centre NSW. "You'll be fighting with your parents if you get in trouble [assuming they act as guarantors]. It is never worth the money to have a family break-up."

For a smart first-home saver account that can turbo charge your savings, see page 34.

UTA MIHM



## Sticky situations

Eggs are quick and easy to fry, poach, scramble or boil. But if you find you don't have the time to prepare this simple meal, the Rollie Vertical Grill turns eggs and other sweet and savoury snacks into cylindrical pops.

The Rollie has a vertical heating element surrounded by a cylindrical non-stick cooking surface, allowing you to cook without a pan. It has a silicone grip that allows you to tip the eggs out easily onto your plate. As well as cooking eggs, you can also make burrito, pizza or cinnamon rollies. Our home economist, Fiona Mair, tested the Rollie by cooking eggs and mince meat (the burger dog recipe provided with the Rollie).

Before putting any food into the chamber for cooking, you need to add a generous amount of cooking



## Anti-trust

**T**he US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has proposed a rule that requires manufacturers of antibacterial soaps to prove their products are more effective than soap and water and safe for long-term use.

According to the FDA, there's currently no evidence that antibacterial soaps are more effective at preventing illness and may in fact be harmful. Research suggests long-term exposure to active ingredients such as triclosan and triclocarban may cause bacterial resistance.

Under the rule, US manufacturers would have to provide evidence for the antibacterial claim, or remove the antibacterial ingredients from the product or the claim from the label. The FDA plans to finalise the ruling by September 2016.

Antibacterial soaps are unregulated in Australia. The Therapeutic Goods

Association says it is monitoring developments.

See our investigation into antibacterial soaps in *CHOICE*, Nov 11 or at [choice.com.au/antibacterial](http://choice.com.au/antibacterial) **JEMMA CASTLE**

oil spray to avoid sticking. It performed poorly for Fiona when cooking eggs for the first time – they were tough and stuck in the chamber. The second time she used more cooking spray and got a very good result – the eggs had a soft yolk and firm, cooked white. Eggs are ready within six minutes, although using your stove and frypan will give you a quicker result.

When cooking the burger dog, Fiona found it difficult to feed the mince into the narrow cooking chamber and had to use the plunger provided. Fat and meat juices splashed onto the bench during cooking. While the meat was cooked, it had limited browning and a stewed texture.

It has bright indicator lights to let you know when it's on and ready to use, but a timer would

be handy. Within a minute it is preheated and ready to go, and while the exterior doesn't become hot, steam is released from the top. It has a short power cord that can be restrictive, but it's lightweight and compact to store. It's also easy to clean – the exterior can be wiped over and the interior can be cleaned with the bottle-type brush that's provided.

### CHOICE verdict

The Rollie does perform as it's intended to, so if you're into these types of gadgets you'll be intrigued. However, we think it's a kitchen appliance you can live without. **REBECCA CIARAMIDARO**



### ROLLIE VERTICAL GRILL

PRICE \$38

CONTACT [bigw.com.au](http://bigw.com.au)



**HELLO  
GMO!**

**US  
\$50bn+**

The predicted value of organic food sales by 2018 if mandatory GM labelling isn't introduced

**US  
\$34bn+**

The current value of organic food sales in the US\*

**60+**

The number of countries (of which the US is not one) that have GM labelling regulations. Australia has GM labelling regulations, but CHOICE believes they're highly inadequate – see [choice.com.au/GMlabelling](http://choice.com.au/GMlabelling) for more

## Whoops

**I**n our tyres 175/65R15 story for *CHOICE* Dec13/Jan14, table footnotes on page 55 refer to having RRP prices as of November 2013. In fact, these are the prices we paid in September 2013. Tyre prices can vary depending on the store or where you live, so shop around. In the same issue (p9) we gave the LotusGrill two stars, saying its performance wasn't impressive. We've since discovered there was an issue with the batteries used during testing. We've retested the LotusGrill and given it three stars – see [choice.com.au/lotusgrill](http://choice.com.au/lotusgrill). And in our home and contents insurance review (*CHOICE*, Nov 13) we incorrectly said Australian Unity offers total replacement protection for buildings. AAMI and ANZ are the only insurers we surveyed offering total replacement policies.



# Your Say

We want to hear from you. If you've had a bad experience, been ripped off or scammed, tell us and help other CHOICE members avoid the same traps. If you've had a great response to a complaint you've taken to a manufacturer or retailer, our members want to know about that too! Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

## Norton not rortin'

**W**ith reference to the letter regarding Symantec (Norton) (CHOICE, Dec 13/Jan 14), I've used Norton for a number of years, sometimes doing automatic renewal and sometimes not. There is a box to tick for auto renewal that can be accessed in your account at any time to cancel.

Last year after I'd accepted and downloaded the auto-renewal, I noticed the same product advertised at Officeworks for \$30 less. I rang the Norton helpline and was immediately offered a refund of the difference – the \$30 was refunded to my credit card within a couple of days.

**Colleen Berry, Stones Corner, Qld**

## Paper chase

**A** statement for my Coles MasterCard, which I use only infrequently (being out in the sticks we don't have a store handy), recently came as something of a surprise.

A few months ago the annual card fee was due but, as we were overseas, it wasn't paid on time. On our return, I phoned to enquire about interest due, and paid it that day. I was told that this would cover it and put an end to the issue.

Not so, however. There was interest on the next statement to the tune of \$1.58, of which 50c was the cost of a paper bill, which we duly paid. Today

I received a statement saying that I owe 50c for my paper statement. I assume that each

month if I continue to pay the 50c and receive a paper statement for which I'm going to be charged 50c, this will go on forever! Goodbye card, I think.

**Nerida Reid, Hay, NSW**

## Service right on Target

**W**e bought a Target stroller (on sale for about \$80) before travelling to the US in September. As we wheeled our two-year-old out of LAX, we realised one of the wheels had been partly sliced (we assume it got caught in a machine or door of some kind).

## For a budget stroller damaged during a flight, Target's service was exceptional

After we'd wheeled the pram around LA for a week, the tread was down to the rim, affecting steering and causing a clacking sound. Back in Australia we thought it would be wasteful to toss it away. As we'd been more than happy with this stroller (wheel issue aside), we contacted Target to see if we could

buy a replacement wheel.

We made it clear that the damage occurred during transit and was not the fault of the stroller or Target (we didn't even have the receipt to prove purchase). Target's customer service operator needed to investigate whether a replacement wheel could be purchased as the stroller was no longer in stock. He got back to us the next day

assuring us that a replacement wheel would be sent to us. This blew us away.

A few days later, two replacement wheels arrived in the post, at no charge. For a budget stroller damaged during a flight, this service was exceptional. Thank you, Target!

**Meredith Lamb, Fawkner, Vic**

## Thumbs



**We bought a Weber Genesis E330 BBQ (as recommended by CHOICE) just before Christmas 2012. Our nine-month-old border collie, who chews everything he can get his teeth into, destroyed the gas bottle hose. I called Weber to order a replacement, and despite explaining that it was my dog that destroyed the hose, Weber sent me out a replacement hose under warranty. While they made it clear I would have to pay (around \$40)**

**should it happen again, I was extremely happy they'd do it at all!**

**David Norman, Woonona, NSW**



**I bought my daughter a new bookcase from Shack Furniture, Artarmon, for her birthday. When we opened it up, we noticed a large crack on the base. We emailed Shack with a photo of the crack and purchase details. Within 10 minutes of sending the email, we received a phone call acknowledging the damage with the promise they'd deliver a new bookcase**



## Contact us!

Email us at

**yoursay@choice.com.au**

or write to Your Say,  
CHOICE, 57 Carrington  
Road, Marrickville,  
NSW 2204

**Allergen warnings allow font sizes on labels to be as small as 3pt type – that's only about 1.5mm high!**

## Have you been warned?

### LETTER OF THE MONTH

**L**ast year I was involved in packing Christmas hampers for people who need a bit of extra joy in the festive season.

Some of the hampers were for people with food allergies or who had special dietary requirements – and that's where the difficulties started. The labels with information about ingredients were printed in such a small font that it was almost impossible to read them. Many background colours also were unsuitable and made it even more difficult to read the list of ingredients.

Then came the most annoying and difficult thing – labels stating at the end “may contain traces of nuts, dairy, wheat, etc”. This “warning” probably absolves the manufacturers of their responsibility and saves them from eventual litigation if people with allergies should eat their products and suffer dire consequences.

But to me it shows that the manufacturers just aren't doing their job properly. They don't clean machines thoroughly and carefully enough to make sure that there are no traces of anything left!

**Brigitte Wustemann, Kilsyth, Vic**

**CHOICE SAYS** Allergen warning labels can be very confusing for consumers. It's mandatory for manufacturers to list the presence of allergens such as gluten or dairy products that are included in the ingredients. Unfortunately these warnings can be hard to read: regulations allow font sizes to be as small as 3pt type – that's only about 1.5mm high! And there's no standard wording, font colour, font style or background colour, which means consumers are confronted with a dizzying array of warning styles or may miss them entirely.

However, it's the “may contain” warnings that cause particular angst. These voluntary warnings are placed



by manufacturers to indicate that the product may be unintentionally cross-contaminated by an allergen during processing.

As there are so many of these warnings out there, some consumers perceive them as a way for companies to avoid potential liability. And their instincts may well be correct. An Australian study found that, of the top five foods most at risk from cross-contamination (chocolates, breakfast cereals, muesli bars, savoury and sweet biscuits), 93% with precautionary warnings did not contain detectable levels of allergens.

A food industry-created risk assessment process called VITAL can determine the probable levels of cross-contamination. But this system is in its infancy, and for now there is no way for consumers to know whether a product has been assessed or not. See [choice.com.au/maycontain](http://choice.com.au/maycontain) for more information.

in an hour and a half. It arrived just over an hour after the call.

**George Perry, CHOICE staffer**



I ordered 60 Christmas cards from Vistaprint, which arrived quickly. I wrote to tell them how pleased I was with both the cards and their service. I also mentioned there were only 59 cards. Within 24 hours Vista emailed me to apologise for the error and let me know that another 10 cards were on the way.

**Barbara Goodey, Phegans Bay, NSW**



# Made in secrecy

How can you really know who made your T-shirt? **Jemma Castle** investigates

**I**t may surprise you to learn that sweatshops aren't exclusive to low-wage countries. In fact it's likely any clothes you wear, with a label saying "Made in Australia", were made by an outworker in a backyard sweatshop, perhaps not far from where you live or work.

Many outworkers are paid below award wages according to the Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) – often about \$7 an hour and, in some cases, as little as \$4, well below the legal minimum of \$17.49 an hour wage for a machinist. And many will work 12- to 15-hour days, seven days a week to make ends meet, says TCFUA national secretary Michele O'Neil.

Home-based work accounts for the majority of Australian garment manufacturing, spanning high-end fashion to school uniforms. Well-known brands flouting Australian labour laws are common, says O'Neil. "We find them every day."

The sourcing network for garments is a tangled web: brands outsource to factories, which outsource yet again. A

textile order can be passed down through three different contractors before ending up with an outworker. Knowledge of supply chains among brands and retailers is often poor, so outworkers are hidden at the bottom of the supply chain.

Efforts are under way, however, to bring this murky world to light.

Ethical Clothing Australia (ECA) provides ethical accreditation for Australian-made clothing brands by mapping the entire supply chain, including the hidden workforce. The accreditation process often uncovers parts of the supply chain that even the brands weren't aware of. ECA accreditation simply guarantees that brands obey the law, which means all workers throughout the supply chain receive fair wages and decent working conditions.

## Who knows?

The lack of transparency in the supply chain has only been compounded by the globalisation of the industry. Based on value, 92% of clothes sold in Australia are imported, according to the Council of Textiles and Fashion Industries of Australia.

And it's all but impossible to discover each step of the journey they've taken. The clothing brands themselves can

rarely trace the journey from fibre production through to textile and garment manufacture. More than 60% of companies examined in a recent report from Baptist World Aid didn't know where their garments were made; 76% didn't know where their fabric was woven, knitted or dyed; and 93% didn't know the origins of the raw fibre.

Russell Mullane, CFO and group logistics manager of Sussan Group, which owns Sussan, Sportsgirl and Suzanne Grae, told CHOICE that while he's confident the company is acting ethically by conducting factory audits, it can't monitor every link in the supply chain continuously. "We live in Australia and it's happening way up yonder. How can we really know?"

## Price squeezing

As Australian garment manufacturing has moved offshore there's been a shift

**100**

Approximate number of processes a garment undergoes from design through to shipment\*

**\$4.06**

The average production costs of an imported piece of clothing\*\*

## HOW TO BUY ETHICALLY

- **Don't buy clothes at rock-bottom prices.** Is the price tag fair?
- **Write to your favourite brands.** Also post on their social media.
- **Use online ethical report cards to learn about brands:**
  - Australian Fashion Report
  - Let's Clean Up Fashion Report
  - Shop Ethical!
- **Ask sales assistants for details.**
- **Shop with certified brands.**
  - Ethical Clothing Australia certifies cut, make and trim for Australian-made clothes. It has 85 accredited brands including Cue, Jets swimwear, Nobody Denim, RM Williams, Collette Dinnigan and Carla Zampatti.
  - Fairtrade certifies the supply chain for cotton production. Accredited brands include Etiko, 3Fish, Audrey Blue, Nudie Jeans Co, RREPP.
  - GOTS certifies organic textiles and ethical labour conditions in textile manufacturing.



in responsibility. A longer supply chain means brands may not know about safety issues and poor working conditions. But ethical clothing campaigners are adamant companies should be responsible for the entire supply chain. O'Neil says companies may claim ignorance but are well aware their sourcing practices put pressure on suppliers to cut prices further down the line.

Despite wage guarantees in codes of conduct, brands bargain with suppliers on price. This price covers everything involved in the garment's production up to the point of shipping, including fabric, manufacturing and middlemen's profits, and usually equates to about 10-20% of the total sale price.

While the labour costs involved with a garment are only a small part of the total cost of sourcing the product, many brands still seek to cut costs at this level, shifting their production to Bangladesh or the western provinces of China.

## Despite best intentions

Sweatshops, characterised by exploitative wages, excessive work hours and unsafe working conditions, are widespread throughout Asia. "Unfortunately, that's the norm," says Oxfam's labour rights advocacy coordinator Daisy Gardener.

But following the Bangladesh factory collapse last April, consumer concern has resulted in some steps in the right direction. There's been a shift in the ethics of the industry over the past six to 12 months, argues Paula Rogers, an international fashion supply chain consultant. "I've never seen retailers want the information [about their suppliers] so much. They'd never asked for codes of conduct before," she says.

A code of conduct doesn't necessarily guarantee better conditions for garment workers. In 2011, Spanish fashion brand Zara was found to be making clothes in a Brazilian sweatshop, despite having a code covering key labour conventions in place. One of Zara's factories had

subcontracted out the work without its knowledge, highlighting the complexities of monitoring a long supply chain.

## Flawed audits

Without an independent regulatory regimen protecting workers' rights globally, companies have devised their own processes for workplace inspections, resulting in an \$80bn market for corporate social responsibility programs.

Unfortunately, the inspections don't always lead to improvements for workers. For example, prior to the collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh, two of the factories inside it had been audited but safety risks had not been identified. Often audits are announced in advance and auditors may lack the expertise to do the job credibly. While independent audits can assist in identifying issues at factories, they aren't always helpful in resolving them, as Måns Carlsson-Sweeny, an analyst at AMP Capital, ►

## TOP 5 COUNTRIES AUSTRALIAN CLOTHING IMPORTS\*\*\*

Total imports = \$5.893bn



**1. China**  
\$4.297bn, 72.9%



**2. Bangladesh**  
\$353m, 6%



**3. India**  
\$131m, 2.2%



**4. Italy**  
\$95m, 1.6%



**5. Indonesia**  
\$94m, 1.6%

**Rest of the world**  
\$923m, 15.6%

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Does the company have an ethical sourcing code? Is it public?
- Does the code cover important International Labour Organization conventions: living wage, no forced or child labour, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, safe and hygienic working conditions, working hours are not excessive, no discrimination, regular employment is provided and no harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed.
- Does it audit its factories? How often? Are the audits independent, unannounced and are results made public?
- Is it part of a multi-stakeholder ethical scheme?
- Is it aware of its fibre and textiles supply chain?
- Are its factory locations public?

has pointed out. Audit results are usually kept secret and so effective remediation may not follow.

Some brands have been working to improve the transparency of their auditing by disclosing factory locations for third-party auditors. In 2005, Nike became the first brand to publish a list

of its suppliers, and others such as Levi's, Puma and H&M followed. So far, Kmart is the only Australian retailer to disclose any of its suppliers, although Target has since committed to do so.

Australian consumers who want to shop ethically should look at the price tag, says Rogers. "If you go and buy a \$3

T-shirt, common sense would say someone hasn't been paid a whole pile to make it." While studies suggest a majority of consumers would be willing to pay more for ethically produced clothes, brands won't change without commercial incentive. "They're in business, not in social enterprise," says Rogers.

## What the companies say

CHOICE contacted Australia's four biggest clothing retailers as well as four discount retailers to ask about their sourcing practices. Big W, Best and Less, Kmart and the Just Group would not comment.

### COUNTRY ROAD

Country Road, Trenery, Witchery, Mimco

**MADE IN** China, India, Vietnam, Pakistan, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey

**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Yes (not public)

**WAGE COMMITMENT** Living wage\*

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** Knows all its primary suppliers, which must ensure subcontractors comply with the code of conduct. Says it's difficult to trace fibre and textile production as it's traded on an open market

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** No

**AUDITS** Regular announced social compliance audits are conducted by an accredited third-party auditing company

SPECIALTY FASHION GROUP

Millers, Katies, Autograph, City Chic, Crossroads and Rivers as of November 2013

**MADE IN** China, Bangladesh and India

**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Nothing publicly available

**WAGE COMMITMENT** Minimum wage\*\*

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** All cut, make and trim (including subcontractors) factories are known. Fibre sourcing and textile production is managed by the factory

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** No, but has signed the Accord (see right)

**AUDITS** Conducts announced audits. Plans to start unannounced audits this year

sussan THE JUST GROUP

Sportsgirl, Suzanne Grae, Sussan

**MADE IN** China and Vietnam  
**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Yes (not public)

**WAGE COMMITMENT** Minimum wage.\*\* Says all audited factories pay above the minimum

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** Doesn't know factories of its wholesalers. Textiles are sourced through mills suggested by agents

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** No

**AUDITS** Yearly announced audits of all factories are conducted by an independent auditing company. Audit information is not made public

Just Jeans, Jay Jays, Jacqui E, Peter Alexander, Portmans and Dotti

**MADE IN** Bangladesh. Would not comment on other source countries

**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Nothing publicly available

**WAGE COMMITMENT** None

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** No comment made

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** No. Has not signed the Accord

**AUDITS** Prior to doing business in a factory, an independent auditor checks the factory complies with local laws and Just Group principles

### THE ACCORD

Companies signatory to the Bangladesh Accord ([bangladeshaccord.org](http://bangladeshaccord.org)) must supply their factory locations so independent inspectors can audit them. They must also provide funds for safety improvements.





## Cutting corners

One brand the TCFUA suspects is disregarding labour laws is Australian women's fashion label, Morrison Clothing. Two outworkers in Morrison's supply chain told CHOICE they get paid an average of about \$8 an hour. They said they were paid \$3-3.50 per shirt for a recent order, each taking about 30 minutes to make.

Elizabeth Macpherson, an organiser at the TCFUA, says the union is currently investigating the company and knows of about 20 outworkers in Morrison's supply chain who are not receiving the correct wages.

Morrison director Richard Poulson said the allegation is "absolutely incorrect. I believe we pay well above what the award would be. We're certainly not trying to strip margins. They [suppliers] quote – we pay them what they want."

However, since brands manufacturing in Australia are legally responsible for their entire supply chain, the amount that labels pay suppliers has to take into account how much it will cost to make the item of clothing using fairly paid labour.

Morrison pays its suppliers per garment which is not unusual. In such cases, the time of the work required on each garment and the price paid for each garment must be written on the work record. From this you can calculate a minute rate which must equate to at least the award wage.

"Morrison doesn't provide the time required to make each garment [on the work record]," says Macpherson.



Essentials, Modernista, Hot Options, MODA, Bellecurve, Adamsville, MAXX

**MADE IN** Bangladesh. Would not specify any other countries where it manufactures

**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Yes

**WAGE COMMITMENT** Minimum wage\*\*

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** No comment made

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** Has committed to publish and has signed the Accord

**AUDITS** Conducts independent regular scheduled and unannounced factory audits throughout the year



Kmart's home brand

**MADE IN** Bangladesh. Would not comment on where else it sources clothes

**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Yes

**WAGE COMMITMENT** Minimum wage\*\*

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** No comment made

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** Has published Bangladeshi factories and has committed to publish all

**AUDITS** Mainly conducts announced audit every six, 12 or 24 months



Blacksmith, Match it, Pink Sugar, Tweed River, Dymples, Joe and Co, Wave Zone

**MADE IN** Bangladesh. Would not comment on where it manufactures

**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Yes

**WAGE COMMITMENT** Living wage\*

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** No comment made

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** No, but has signed the Accord

**AUDITS** No comment made



Edited

**MADE IN** Bangladesh. Would not comment on where it manufactures

**ETHICAL SOURCING CODE?** Yes

**WAGE COMMITMENT** Living wage\*

**SUPPLY CHAIN TRACEABILITY** No comment made

**PUBLISHES FACTORY DETAILS?** No. Has not signed the Accord

**AUDITS** No comment made

### WHAT ABOUT MYER & DJS?

As well as stocking other brands, Myer and David Jones have their own. In Baptist World Aid's *Australian Fashion Report*, which ranks companies on ethical sourcing policies, transparency and traceability, monitoring and training, and worker rights, neither scored favourably. In this A-F rating system, Myer scored a D+ and DJS an F. ■



## A slice of heaven?

Tempting packaging and gourmet ingredients have made frozen pizzas seem more appealing. But are they any healthier or better tasting? **Miranda Herron** finds out

**T**he appetite for authentic, traditional-style pizzas using gourmet ingredients is being increasingly reflected on the packaging of frozen pizzas. But how do these products stack up in reality? CHOICE checked out more than 50 frozen pizzas commonly sold in supermarkets.

In line with this trend, very few of the pizzas we looked at had old-style budget-looking packs. Instead, most offered artfully shot, luscious images of gourmet-style pizzas, with descriptions such as “mild goat’s cheese with spinach, roasted mushrooms and juicy cherry tomatoes”, “premium leg ham”,

“stone baked in a wood fired oven” or “only the finest ingredients”.

Although these pizzas are mass produced, packshots are likely to show them on a wooden chopping block, with a glimpse of fresh ingredients in a rustic kitchen or a linen napkin and sometimes an enticing glass of red wine (see below).

### Pic vs packshot

**W**e photographed the cooked pizzas to see how they compare to the picture on the box. As you’ll see, sometimes there’s quite a discrepancy between marketing and reality...





## Lighter choice?

**T**here appears to be an increase in vegetarian frozen pizza choices, perhaps in a nod to healthier eating. While vegetarian pizzas can be better for you than meaty ones, if they're cheese-heavy it will add significant kilojoules and fat. For a lighter choice, look for a pizza with more vegetables, and less meat and cheese. Unsurprisingly, the two Weight Watchers pizzas we looked at were the lowest in kilojoules and saturated fat. However, with a whole one-serve pizza weighing in at a tiny 175g, it's almost a third of the size of the 500g pizzas. And at about 645kJ, they're more of a snack than a meal.

It's to be expected that most pizzas have a hefty fat content, but some have frankly terrifying amounts. If you eat a whole, one-serve Dr. Oetker Ristorante Mozzarella you'll be wolfing down 45.6g of fat – more than three tablespoons.

## Crust

Despite descriptors such as “super thin” or “regular”, most crusts look quite similar. And they don't seem to make a big impact on the kJ content either. It's the toppings that seem to determine the pizzas' nutritional value.



## KILOJOULES PER 100g

### Highest

- 1 **Dr. Oetker** Pepperoni Salame (1160kJ)
- 2 **Dr. Oetker** Mozzarella (1112kJ)
- 3 **When in Rome** Margherita (901kJ)



### Lowest

- 4 **Weight Watchers** Hawaiian (645kJ)
- 5 **Casa Barelli** Vegetable (Aldi) (789kJ)
- 6 **Woolworths Select** Roasted Mediterranean Vegetables (797kJ)



## Copping a serve

**W**hen comparing nutritional values between pizzas, beware the “per serve” figures on the nutritional information panel – the suggested “serves” per pizza don't reflect how many serves people actually eat. If you eat one 56g “serve” of When In Rome Hawaiian, for example, you'd consume 545kJ. Realistically, an adult is more likely to eat at least a quarter of the pizza (two slices – 1090kJ) or half (four slices – 2180kJ). We asked a few men and they said they'd easily eat one whole pizza (eight serves – 4360kJ) – that's half the suggested daily adult kilojoule intake of 8700kJ. The per 100g figure is the best way to calculate how many kilojoules you've eaten – but remember to take into account the weight of the pizza. Eating half of a 500g pizza may be 500kJ more than eating half of a 400g pizza with the same amount of kilojoules. ▶

We looked at more than 50 pizzas

0

had low sodium levels (less than 120mg/100g)

20%

had high sodium levels (600mg/100g or more)

If you ate half of a McCain's Pepperoni pizza, you'd consume 1440mg of sodium. That's 100% of the safe daily upper sodium limit for kids aged four to eight, 72% for nine- to 13-year-olds (2000mg) and 63% for adults (2300mg)

## SATURATED FAT PER 100g

### Highest

- 1 **McCain** Margherita (6.7g)
- 2 **McCain** Tandoori Chicken (6.5g)
- 3 **McCain** Spinach & Mozzarella (6g)



### Lowest

- 4 **Weight Watchers** Hawaiian (0.9g)
- 5 **Woolworths Select** Roasted Mediterranean Vegetables (1.5g)
- 6 **Casa Barelli** Vegetable (Aldi) (1.9g)





# Our taste test

**W**e recruited a team of enthusiastic, hungry tasters to try Hawaiian and vegetarian frozen pizzas. Sadly, the tasters' anticipation turned almost immediately to disappointment – and in some cases

revulsion – once the tasting began. The topline response from the tasters was that the vegetarian pizzas were OK, but the Hawaiian pizzas were so dire they had some trouble picking the worst of the contenders.

## Hawaiian

### How they tasted

**T**he pizza with the highest kilojoules and fat was the favourite, although the tasters were generally unenthused and struggled to pick a winner. However, the majority of testers were united in their condemnation of the worst pizza, which was also the most expensive.



**This pizza by a whisker. Not great, but the best of a fairly ordinary bunch**



## The expert says

**L**ike our tasters, Natasha Murray, accredited practising dietitian and spokesperson for the Dietitians Association of Australia, struggled to find any redeeming features of frozen pizzas. "Like most processed foods, frozen pizzas are high in fat and salt. Even with vegetarian pizzas, you'd be lucky to get even one serve of veggies on a whole pizza, and the meat is generally poor quality," she says. "Dietary guidelines advise you to limit processed foods, but if you do choose to eat a frozen pizza, add an extra serve of veggies with a side salad."



**Barely fits into the pizza category**

**Foul, artificial taste**



**Had some flavour**



**Weird little shrunk pizza with too much tomato sauce**

|                                              | ENERGY<br>(kJ per 100g) | FAT<br>(g per 100g) | SAT FAT<br>(g per 100g) | SODIUM<br>(mg per 100g) | WEIGHT<br>(g) | SERVES | PRICE<br>(\$)* | PRICE (\$<br>per 100g) |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------|----------------|------------------------|
| <b>When in Rome</b> Hawaiian (Coles)         | 974                     | 7.4                 | 3.2                     | 339                     | 450           | 8      | 3.00           | 0.67                   |
| <b>International Cuisine</b> Hawaiian (Aldi) | 963                     | 6.3                 | 3.4                     | 340                     | 500           | 8      | 3.00           | 0.60                   |
| <b>Dr. Oetker</b> Papa Giuseppe's Hawaiian   | 939                     | 6.9                 | 2.6                     | 600                     | 445           | 4      | 6.99           | 1.57                   |
| <b>McCain</b> Ham & Pineapple                | 963                     | 6.3                 | 3.4                     | 340                     | 500           | 4      | 6.25           | 1.25                   |
| <b>Woolworths Home Brand</b> Family Hawaiian | 920                     | 5.9                 | 2.2                     | 290                     | 500           | 8      | 3.00           | 0.60                   |
| <b>Weight Watchers</b> Hawaiian              | 645                     | 2                   | 0.9                     | 310                     | 175           | 1      | 6.28           | 3.59                   |

## Lousy labels

An analysis of 174 frozen and takeaway pizzas in WA found more than half had more salt, sugar or fat than stated in the nutritional panel. McCains and When In Rome results were inconsistent across products, and Woolworths products had 20% higher sugar levels than stated.\*\*

## Vegetarian

### How they tasted

The vegetarian pizzas highlight the tendency for fancy marketing jargon on the box such as “wood-fired” and “Mediterranean”. But our testers didn’t pick up on these gourmet traits; instead, some were perplexed by what they called the “burnt taste” on the bottom of a “wood-fired” pizza. ■



Looked like a rabbit vomited on it, but best-tasting one, with generous quantity of toppings

Tastes like real spinach on top, nice and simple



Gross, soggy, gluey, bland. Yuck

Smelled, looked and tasted bad. Base was doughy and cheese flavourless



RUNNER UP

|                                                   | ENERGY<br>(kJ per 100g) | FAT<br>(g per 100g) | SAT FAT<br>(g per 100g) | SODIUM<br>(mg per 100g) | WEIGHT<br>(g) | SERVES | PRICE<br>(\$)* | PRICE (\$<br>per 100g) |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------|----------------|------------------------|
| <b>Dr. Oetker</b> Ristorante Pizza Spinaci        | 943                     | 11.7                | 2.8                     | 482                     | 390           | 1      | 6.99           | 1.79                   |
| <b>McCain</b> Mediterranean Vegetable             | 899                     | 9.7                 | 5.1                     | 440                     | 310           | 4      | 6.99           | 2.25                   |
| <b>Woolworths Select</b><br>Roasted Mediterranean | 797                     | 3.6                 | 1.5                     | 510                     | 420           | 8      | 4.99           | 1.19                   |
| <b>Casa Barelli</b> Vegetable (Aldi)              | 789                     | 4.2                 | 1.9                     | 310                     | 400           | 8      | 3.99           | 1.00                   |
| <b>When in Rome</b> Margherita (Coles)            | 901                     | 5.9                 | 3.4                     | 280                     | 450           | 8      | 3.00           | 0.67                   |





## The takeaway message

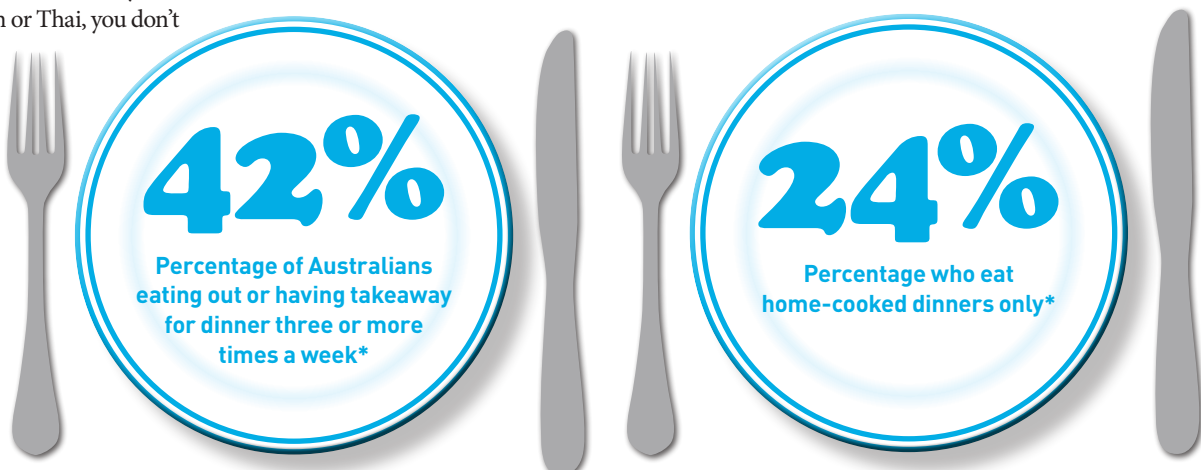
We're increasingly looking to takeaways for our next meal. But which best help you look after your tastebuds and your waistline? **Zoya Sheftalovich** finds out

**E**ating food prepared by others has become a habit for Australians – we each eat takeaway an average of 2.5 times a week for dinner. As a result, we're adding more salt, sugar and saturated fat to our diet than we should and may easily exceed the 8700kJ energy-per-day guideline for an average Australian adult.

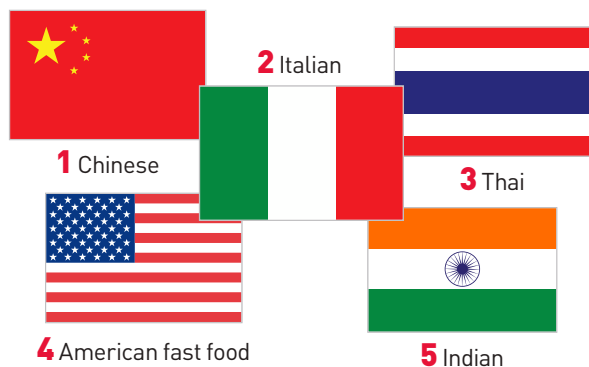
The good news is that whether you love Chinese, Indian or Thai, you don't have to sacrifice health for convenience. There are better dishes in most cuisines, says accredited practising dietitian Dr Kellie Bilinski – it's just a matter of knowing what to choose.

### ASK AND YOU SHALL EAT

One pitfall of takeaway food is that it's difficult to know exactly what ingredients and cooking methods have been used. There's far less saturated fat in a stir-fry that's been cooked in a vegetable oil such as canola or sunflower, for example, than in an oil that has very high saturated fat such as coconut. Bilinski recommends asking your takeaway haunts about their cooking methods and choosing those that are healthier. You can also always ask for sauces and dressings on the side, and for less salt and sugar in your meals.



## MOST POPULAR TAKEAWAYS IN OZ



## DINNER DECISIONS

**D**r Kellie Bilinski says that, as a general rule, when looking to eat out healthily it's important to avoid battered and fried foods, as well as curries or soups that are creamy or contain coconut milk or cream. Also look out for all-protein dishes (if you want Mongolian lamb for example, balance it with a mixed vegetable dish). She suggests opting for fresh salads, fresh rice paper rolls, steamed fish dishes and stir-fries with lots of vegetables.

And make sure you don't undo your good menu choices with too many carbohydrates. "People generally eat too much rice," says Bilinski. "Just have one cup rather than the three or four you get to a serve, because it's quite an energy-dense food. If you can get brown rice, definitely go for that. And avoid the fried rice, as it is high in [energy] and fat."

While there are better and worse options available in Chinese, Indian and Thai cuisines, Bilinski believes Thai has the widest selection of healthier meals. However, she warns against eating takeout too often, as doing so makes it very difficult to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.

"When you're cooking at home, you have more control over what goes into your food – and it tends to be less processed," she says. "It's all about being prepared. Lean fish and meat doesn't take long to grill or steam at home. People resort to takeaway when they're not prepared."

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

**\$70**  
per week

The amount the average Australian spends on eating out at cafes, takeaway and restaurants\*\*

\* SOURCE: Ipsos Australia  
\*\* SOURCE: CommBank Signals, with data calculated through the collection and analysis of CommBank transactional data from 2009-12 combined with CommBank research findings.  
\*\*\* SOURCE: NUTTAB nutrient data.

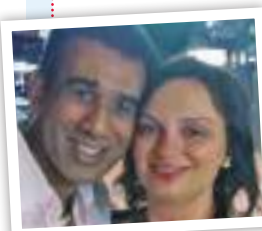
## Lean cuisines

We asked three families to share their typical order of Chinese, Thai or Indian takeaways. Dr Bilinski provides tips on how to get the best out of each of these cuisines.



### CHINESE

Look for lean proteins such as seafood, lean pork or chicken breast, or meat alternatives such as tofu (avoid the deep-fried version though) and steer clear of fatty meat such as duck. When ordering sauce with your stir-fry, Bilinski recommends oyster and soy. "While they're high in salt, they tend not to be as high in sugar and fats as opposed to sweet-and-sour sauce, for example."



### Kim & Jonathan

Kim and her partner Jonathan generally order takeaway three to four times a week. Kim says she tries to make healthy food choices when cooking at home, but when dining out tends to have

a more relaxed attitude. She particularly likes choosing items on a menu that are complicated or difficult to replicate at home.

### Their order

- Steamed prawn dumplings
- Duck with XO sauce
- Chicken with cashew nut
- Stir-fried mixed vegetables
- Chinese broccoli

### THE VERDICT

**Dr Bilinski says** The steamed prawn dumplings are a good choice. If you can find steamed dumplings or spring rolls, they're much better options than fried ones. But most dumplings are essentially just bread with meat inside, so they're not very balanced. The duck with XO sauce isn't a great option because duck tends to be very high in fat. The chicken with cashew nut is a better choice, as it tends to be leaner. Keep in mind too that Chinese sauces can be high in salt. The stir-fried mixed vegetables and Chinese broccoli are much better choices. ▶

**522kJ**

Energy in 100g of garlic prawns\*\*\*

**947kJ**

Energy in 100g of sweet and sour duck\*\*\*

**852kJ**  
**vs 677kJ**

Energy in 100g of fried rice versus 100g of boiled rice\*\*\*





## thai

Thai cuisine offers some of the better choices when it comes

to takeaway, Bilinski says. She advises against fried or battered foods, curries made with coconut milk or cream, and richer sauces. Thai salads are a great option as they tend to have less oil. Steamed fish and raw food such as fresh rice paper rolls are also good choices, as are clear soups (though they can be high in salt). But beware, sugar is big in Thai cuisine. And that perennial favourite, pad Thai? "It's basically carbohydrate and the peanut-based sauce, which is quite rich," says Bilinski.

# 189kJ

Energy in 100g of  
tom yum goong soup  
(prawn)\*\*\*

# 474kJ

Energy in 100g of  
tom kha gai soup  
(chicken)\*\*\*

# 873kJ

Energy in 100g of  
pad Thai\*\*\*

### Steve, Deborah, Daniel & Prudence

Steve and Deborah live with their twin children Daniel and Prudence, aged 21. Steve says the family makes healthy food choices, and Steve and Daniel recently became vegans.

### Their order

- Fried spring rolls
- Vegan fresh rice paper rolls
- Satay chicken
- Vegetarian tom kha soup



- Pad Thai with chicken
- Pad see ew vegetarian
- Jasmine rice (large)

### THE VERDICT

**Dr Bilinski says** The fried spring rolls aren't great and neither is the tom kha, as it's high in fat from its coconut base. Grilled satay chicken is good but can come with lots of sauce, so ask for it on the side. The pad Thai and pad see ew noodles may be very high in kilojoules due to the noodles.



## indian

Indian can be a tricky cuisine for the health-conscious, with many curries containing ghee, a type of clarified butter. When choosing a curry, steer away from coconut milk or cream-based concoctions – you're better

off with a tomato-based one. "Even something like dal may contain a lot of saturated fat," Bilinski says.

### Darrin, Liz, Delia & Lenny

Darrin and his wife Liz have two young children Delia and Lenny, and they eat takeaway food once or twice a week. They occasionally treat themselves, but mostly they try to eat healthily.



### Their order

- Pappadums (two serves)
- Vegetable samosa
- Butter chicken
- Palak paneer
- Mixed vegetable curry
- Garlic naan
- Steamed rice
- Cucumber raita

### THE VERDICT

**Dr Bilinski says** Fried pappadums and vegetable samosas aren't a great choice and neither are the butter chicken and garlic naan, as both are high in fat. The palak paneer could be a good choice as long as it comes with a non-ghee sauce, as it contains cottage cheese and spinach. The mixed vegetable curry isn't ideal if it comes with a coconut base, but if it's tomato-based it's fine. The cucumber raita and steamed rice are good choices.

# 560kJ

Energy in 100g of  
beef vindaloo\*\*\*

# 926kJ

Energy in 100g of  
butter chicken\*\*\*

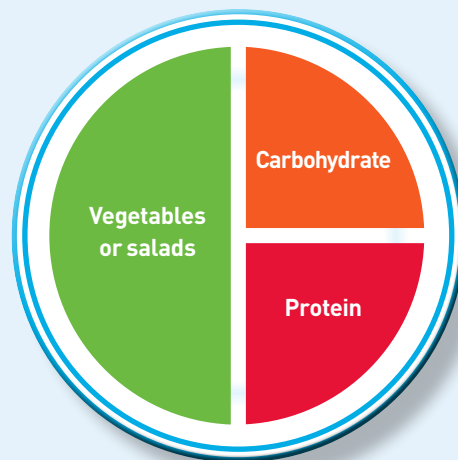
# 1205kJ

Energy in 100g of  
plain naan\*\*\*

## The right ratio

Bilinski says that when it comes to takeaway, skewed ratios of the food on our plates is a big problem. "You should base your meals on vegetables. When you look at a plate, you should have half of it covered in vegetables or salads, one-quarter with protein such as meat or fish, and one-quarter with carbohydrate such as rice or pasta. This balance is very difficult to achieve if one relies on takeaway foods.

"That said, if someone's diet is based on plenty of wholegrain breads, cereals, fresh veggies and fruit, a takeaway here and there is fine." ■



\*\*\* Source: NUTTAB nutrient data.

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# A question of taste

Australians are drinking less beer but we're choosing premium craft brews, as **Jodi Bird** discovers

**U**ntil recently, the last time Aussies consumed less than 100 litres of beer a year, World War Two had just ended (see right). Consumption has been falling since the 1970s, but our demand for quality is higher than ever, with a record 150 breweries now producing craft beer.

## Craft what?

The definition of craft beer varies according to who you ask. Chuck Hahn's Hahn Premium arguably began the current craft beer boom in the late 1980s before he was bought out by Lion Nathan (now Lion). The Hahn brewery was then renamed the Malt Shovel Brewery, which today produces Australia's biggest-selling craft beer, James Squire.

Crediting the large brewers with nurturing the craft beer industry, Hahn

**96**  
litres of beer were  
consumed per  
person in 1946\*

**192**  
in 1974

**97**  
in 2012

argues craft beer has several definitions. "Part of it is delivering on flavour that people expect and having the credibility of a brewmaster behind

it who identifies with brands and controls all stages of the process," he says.

But the Australian Real Craft Brewers Association disagrees.

For them, a craft beer must be independent, traditional and 100% Australian owned, with no ownership or control by a major brewer, such as Lion. Last year's Australian brewer of the year, Shawn Sherlock of Murray's Craft Brewing Co, also lists independence, as well as a smaller batch size, allowing more control of the brewing process, as key characteristics of a craft beer. But he only contradicts Hahn reluctantly. "Chuck has done so much for the industry, it's difficult to criticise him."

## Our demand for quality beer is higher than ever, with 150 breweries now producing craft beer

Sherlock is also quick to point out that American craft beers such as Sierra Nevada and Dog Tooth are now large breweries with a bigger market share in the US than Coopers has here, "but you can't not see these as craft beers".

## Pub battleground

Sherlock told CHOICE the better margins on tap beer can help grow a business and make it successful. Murray's pays \$32 in excise tax per litre of pure alcohol on the

## Market share

### KIRIN/LION

● 43% overall beer market share

● 31% craft beer market share

### SABMILLER/CUB

● 39.4% overall beer market share

● 16% craft beer market share\*\*

keg compared with \$45 for the bottle. Add to that the extra packaging costs, and it's clear tap beer is where the war is won.

However, the Australian Real Craft Brewers Association argues that the major brewers control the pub taps.

Most publicans have contracts with the major brewers, which commonly offer kickbacks such as rebates or installation and maintenance of lines and taps by the brewery. So the battlefield shrinks to one or two leftover taps known as "floating taps", which the pubs use for craft brews. But the common experience is that a big brewer's sales rep notices an independent craft beer on the floating taps and, several new umbrellas for the beer garden later, the independent's beer has been bumped off the tap in favour of the big brewer's craft beer line.

Smaller breweries can't compete with these services. The best they can offer the publican is the beer at keg price. Nevertheless, Sherlock argues that "it used to be that craft brewers could only hold a tap for one to two weeks, but now we're able to access and hold the taps better than ever."

"As long as the public understands that some of the craft brands they're consuming are big brewery brands, that's all that matters. Let the beer stand up in the glass for itself."

## GET LESS FOR MORE!

**C**raft beers are widely regarded as better beers, and that's reflected in the cost. But you also get less beer for your buck.

Standard beer bottles are usually 375mL in Australia, but if you go for the good stuff you can expect to get less. A stubby of Coopers Pale or Sparkling Ale is 375mL, for example, but Coopers reduces its Celebration Ale offering to 355mL. And you'll only get 345mL in a bottle of James Squire or Woolworths Sail & Anchor, and a mere 330mL in Little Creatures or Coles Steamrail.



### BREWERY SWILL

According to an IBISWorld report, the Australian brewing industry is still one of the most profitable in the world, making it attractive to multinationals. Japanese brewer Kirin acquired Lion in 2009, and the world's second-largest brewer, SABMiller, engulfed Foster's (now CUB) in 2011, leaving Coopers the largest Australian brewer with only a 3.5% market share. And Lion and CUB have been busy gulping craft breweries, most recently with Lion's acquisition of Little World Beverages, brewers of Little Creatures. In 2012, Coca-Cola Amatil sold its local alcohol arm to CUB and stayed out of the market until December 2013 as part of the deal. But it wasted no time re-entering the market, securing rights to a range of international craft beers and forming the Australian Beer Company to produce locally brewed craft beers.

Even the supermarkets are in on the game. Woolworths owns a 25% stake in Gage Roads, which produces private label beer for Woolworths Liquor such as the craft-branded Sail & Anchor, while Coles offers its own private-label beer, Steamrail Ale. ■

<sup>^</sup> 100% Australian owned, with no ownership or control by a major industry company.





## Not so smart

Modern car keys mean better security and convenience – but this can come at a price. **Kate Browne** investigates

**R**eplacing a lost car key used to be simple – you'd take the spare to your local key cutter and for about \$10 you could have a copy made. These days, however, it's a different story.

Not only does the modern car key start your car, it can also unlock the doors remotely and provides extra security thanks to transponder technology, (see right). All of this is great news until you lose or damage your keys – and discover you're up for hefty replacement costs.

### Lost means cost

Many car owners have no idea how much their key is worth until they lose one, says car key industry expert and product manager at Locksmiths' Supply Company Tom Stokes. "Most people are shocked when they discover they are up for hundreds of dollars and time off the road just for a key."

CHOICE shadow shopped for replacement keys for 11 popular models at car dealerships based in NSW and SA, and found the costs of single replacement key ranges from \$267 to \$740 (see graphic, page 33). And in addition to the cost, there are waiting times to order, cut and code the key – which could mean up to a full day off the road. It's a high price to pay for

losing something you have to carry with you on most days.

While the cost of a single replacement key is high, if you lose all the keys to your car, costs and time off the road will increase significantly if the car's computer has to be reset or completely replaced to match the new replacement keys. We were quoted between \$1800 to over \$5000 for work done on various models of car, during which time the owner had no keys to the vehicle to get it back on the road.

Independent industry experts told us that increasingly complicated technology used in car accessories, including keys, is a



This car's computer had to be removed and replaced after both keys were lost

### ANATOMY OF A MODERN CAR KEY

**M**odern car keys can vary in their size, shape and how they are used – but the majority are made up of three parts.



The **blade**, which is what is put into the car to start it

The **transponder** is an electronic chip inside the head of the key. It must be coded to the car and transmits a signal when inserted in the ignition to provide the vehicle with an immobiliser/security system

The **remote section** that locks and unlocks the car

sales growth area for dealerships but can be a high-tech headache for car owners.

### An independent alternative

Auto locksmiths offer a legitimate alternative service to a car dealership to cut and re-code modern car keys for most models. An added bonus is that they can come to you, which means you avoid the hassle of travelling to a dealership, which is a major issue if you have lost all your keys. In many cases they will also charge less (see page 33).

Northern NSW-based auto locksmith Adam Marotte has worked with modern car keys since their introduction to the Australian market. He says many people are simply unaware there's an alternative to going through the dealership. "We can cut and code the keys on the spot for most models of car, and we carry the equipment and parts to do so," Marotte says.

While auto locksmiths carry genuine keys, they also use after-market keys (which may look different to the original). These work just as well, but cost less. Some carry diagnostic tools that can help reset the car's computer if both keys are lost.

While there are more than 100 auto locksmiths working across Australia, Stokes says that "most people just tend to call their dealership, or if they look in the manual it will often state that you must source your keys from the manufacturer or dealer directly".

The Master Locksmiths Association can provide contact details for auto locksmiths at [masterlocksmiths.com.au](http://masterlocksmiths.com.au)



### KEYLESS KEYS

The latest innovation in modern car keys is the keyless or proximity key. It's a device you can keep in your pocket or bag that's recognised by the car, unlocks the door and allows you to start the car simply by pushing a button on the dashboard. It's convenient if you have your hands full of shopping or the kids, but this can come at a cost.

These keys are generally more expensive than their remote relatives, ranging between \$400 and \$800. And several CHOICE members told us of their problems with this technology.

Graham said his key started having trouble being recognised by the car, resulting in him having to walk back and forth several times to get it to work.

Another couple got into strife when one woman hopped out of the car with

the "key" in her bag, leaving her husband to drive for another hour and stop before realising he was stranded and couldn't start or lock the car again without the key.

More worryingly, a Queensland woman recently was locked inside her Audi Q3, which used the keyless technology. The car didn't recognise the key and wouldn't allow her to start her car or open the doors or windows on a 41°C day. Manufacturers say black spots can block the signal between car and key occasionally.

Victorian locksmith Chris Rose says keyless keys are becoming a lot more common in new cars. "They can be convenient, but you have to ask yourself: is the hassle when something goes wrong worth the convenience of not having to pull a key out of your pocket?"

### Just one key?

If you're buying a car, be sure to ask about the keys before you sign on the dotted line. While most dealers will provide a new car owner with two full sets of keys, there is no legal requirement to do so.

Auto locksmith Chris Rose says he recently bought his daughter a new Ford and was only supplied with one fully remote keyless key – the second key was manual. When he asked for a second full remote key he was told it would cost an

extra \$700. "[But] the manual key involved a number of complicated steps to get the car running and is really an emergency key." Rose negotiated a second key as part of the sale, but notes this practice is on the increase.

CHOICE member Teresa says she bought a demonstration car from a dealership and was only given one key after she paid. When she asked for the second key they said they didn't have one, saying if the car is used the

dealership doesn't always get two keys. After finding out a replacement key would cost several hundred dollars, she argued with head office and finally received an extra key at no cost. ▶





## Smart but not strong

CHOICE readers have complained about problems with their keys wearing out, developing faults or breaking, resulting in an expensive replacement.

CHOICE member Daphne told us her Mazda 3 key needed a new battery and after two attempts to replace it herself she went to her local dealership, which also couldn't open the key. She says the dealership accused her of tampering with the key by gluing it shut after dropping it. When she demonstrated that both the keys she had for the car wouldn't open properly, she was told she'd have to purchase a new key for more than \$200.

Edward (left) had a smart key for a

Volkswagen where the plastic hook that allowed him to attach his key to a key ring snapped off.

When he asked if just the shell could be replaced with a new hook, he was told his only option was to order a new key at a cost of \$600.

Danielle says when her Toyota key became loose she was left with just half the shell on the device, which resulted in the internal parts falling out and getting lost. The cost of a replacement key? Between \$450-600.

Auto locksmith Chris Rose says a particularly Australian problem is beachgoers or surfers who discover normal car keys aren't waterproof. He's been approached to make a number of special waterproof keys at an additional cost to drivers.



## THE RIGHT TO REPAIR

As car parts (including keys) are becoming increasingly reliant on the car's computer, highly specialised equipment is needed to maintain and repair them. And some car keys now require unique PIN codes for the key to be "recognised" by the car's computer during replacement.

In many cases these codes are not provided to car owners, and are held either by the dealers or in some cases the manufacturers overseas, effectively locking independent mechanics, auto electricians and auto locksmiths out of the market. Auto locksmiths can't provide a replacement service for some car brands or have to invest in expensive diagnostic equipment to work without the code. This cost is passed on to customers.

In the US, independent car technicians can apply to access a register of PIN codes, which allows repairs, access to the car's computer and the ability to re-set car keys. This in turn allows car owners to choose who does the servicing and to shop around.

Earlier last year, the previous Australian government called for a code of conduct to be established between independent automotive repairers and manufacturers. After a review, the Commonwealth Consumer Affairs Advisory Council urged the automotive industry to "develop, within a reasonable period of time, an outcome (such as a voluntary industry code of conduct) that ensures there is a process for independent repairers to access repair information".

In the meantime, the independent auto locksmiths we spoke to believe that the industry is less accessible than ever.



## TOP TIPS

- Ensure you always have two keys for your car. Replacing one key can be an expensive hassle, but having no key can cost thousands as the car's computer may have to be reset – or replaced to match the new keys coded to the car.
- If you need a single replacement key, some car keys can now be cut by local key-cutting companies such as Mr Minit. However, they'll still need to be coded by a dealer or auto locksmith.
- If you're buying a new car, try asking for a third key as part of the bargaining process. As some keys cost as much as \$800, having a spare could be a major saving in the future.
- If you're buying a second-hand car, make sure there's a second key available from the vendor and check that it works. Also ask the owner if they've had replacement keys made for the car in the past. Some car models can only have 10 keys coded to the car's computer – once that number is exceeded, the computer may need to be replaced or reset at a high cost.
- It's a good idea to leave one of your spare keys with someone who can access it easily should you lose yours when out or somewhere a long way from assistance.
- If your key is a flip-style model, it's a good idea to rotate between keys so one doesn't wear out too quickly.
- Never leave your spare key in the car.
- Don't be tempted by the blank keys on offer on eBay – many won't work.
- In case you drop or lose your keys, it's worth having a tag with your first name and phone number, so if it's found you can be contacted. But don't use info that can be linked to the car or your address.

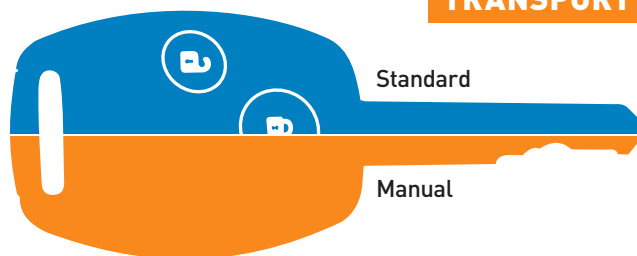
## Standard key vs manual key

With many cars you can use either a standard key, which includes the remote (to unlock and disarm the car alarm remotely), and then the actual key part that is used to start the car. (There are exceptions with some brands and models that are integrated into the remote or fob.)

A manual key still contains the all-important transponder but doesn't

include the remote part, which means you have to manually open the car door. The upside is that it's a cheaper alternative to the full remote key, and can get you back on the road quickly if you lose your keys.

During our shadow shop, only one car dealership contacted offered our caller



a standard key as a lower-cost option; the rest only offered the more expensive full remote option. According to the auto locksmiths we contacted, most car models on our list can use a standard key as an alternative. ■

## Pricing for popular car keys

We shadow shopped for replacement car keys at 22 dealerships across NSW and SA, and compared their quotes with those of an auto locksmith in the same state. Below is a sample of what we found. In some cases you save over \$100 by shopping around.

**\$** Standard key   **\$** Manual key

### MAZDA 2 (2012)

NSW



Auto locksmith (including travel to the car) – 45-minute job: **\$385** **\$165**

### SUBARU FORESTER (2010)

NSW



Auto locksmith (including travel to the car) – 45-minute job: **\$385** **\$187**

### MITSUBISHI OVERLANDER (2013)

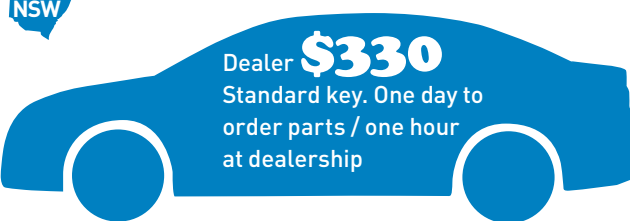
SA



Auto locksmith (including travel to the car) – 45-minute job: **\$260** **\$150**

### NISSAN PULSAR (2012)

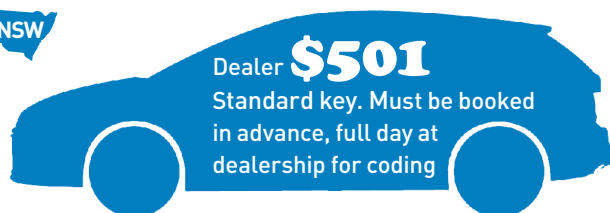
NSW



Auto locksmith (including travel to the car) – 45-minute job: **\$283** **\$143**

### FORD FOCUS (2010)

NSW



Auto locksmith (including travel to the car) – 45-minute job: **\$350** **\$176**

### LEXUS IS 250 (2010)

SA



Auto locksmith (including travel to the car): **\$660\*** \* with existing fob / no manual option available





# Save your soul

Saving for a home deposit is harder than ever, but there is a way to give your savings a boost. **Uta Mihm** takes a look

**T**he great Australian dream of owning your own home has slipped further out of reach for many as house prices continue to climb and bigger deposits are needed. So it's no surprise first-home buyer numbers have hit a 20-year low.

Low-deposit – and even no-deposit – loans have returned after being scaled back during the GFC. But they can spell trouble when interest rates rise. And lender's mortgage insurance – usually required if you put down less than 20% of

**TIP**

Parents and other family members can also make deposits into a First Home Saver account to help their children or grandchildren buy a home.

the total mortgage – can add thousands to your loan costs, making the first step even harder (see page 36). But with a bit of budgeting and long-term planning, there is a potential way out of the rut.

The First Home Saver (FHS) scheme boosts your savings with an annual 17% government contribution on the first \$6000 deposited each year. It also comes with bonus tax advantages. The downsides? You'll need to save during four financial years before you can use the money to buy a home. If you decide you don't want to take the plunge after all, you're obliged to park the money you've saved in your superannuation account rather than spend or invest it as you wish.

To see if a FHS account is for you, check out our infographic (opposite).

**\$90,000**

The cap after which you can't make any more deposits into the FHS account



## HOW IT WORKS

FHS accounts were introduced by the government in 2008 but never really caught on. Yes, they can seem complicated and restrictive, and the fact you can only use the money after you've held the account across four financial years may be off-putting to some. But they do provide regular injections of free money, and developing a regular savings habit is a good thing.

FHS accounts have also become somewhat less restrictive of late. In 2011, the rules were changed to allow people who buy a home before they qualify to keep the account for the rest of the qualifying period and then transfer the funds to their mortgage rather than their super.

Banks have been slow to take up FHS accounts, probably because of the government paperwork involved. The two major banks that once offered them have pulled out, but some credit unions, building societies and mutual banks are still on board. As of June last year, just over 45,000 FHS accounts existed, 5000 more than three months earlier. This growth makes sense, since the best FHS interest rates are very competitive, even when compared with high-interest accounts (see table, page 36).

### Tip

If you open a FHS account by June this year, you'll qualify to use the money to buy a home in July 2016 since you would have then held the account across four financial years. And if you want to buy the home jointly and open two FHS accounts (one for each of you), the money in both accounts will be available once the first person qualifies.

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

### Trap

While you can stop your contributions, a financial year will only be counted towards the four years if you have deposited at least \$1000 during it.

## Is a First Home Saver account for you?

NEVER BOUGHT  
A HOME  
TO LIVE IN?

AGED  
BETWEEN  
18 AND 65?

LOOKING TO BUY  
A HOME IN  
FOUR  
OR MORE YEARS?

CAN YOU  
SAVE  
AT LEAST  
\$1000/YEAR?

**Note:** You are still eligible to open an FHS account if you've have bought an investment property as long as you've never lived in it.

## What's in it for me?

The main advantage of a FHS account compared to other savings accounts is that you receive a 17% government contribution to any amount between \$1000 and \$6000 (indexed) that you deposit in a year. That's a \$1020 contribution on a \$6000 deposit – and you also get roughly three per cent of regular interest, which works out to be a whopping 20% return for the first year. Hardly any other investment can compare with this, especially since FHS accounts are very low risk. Also, interest is only taxed at 15%, not your marginal tax rate as with other accounts (and the government contribution is tax-free).

### But what's the downside?

Once you've made a deposit, the money is committed and there are only two ways you can access it: either buy a home or transfer it into your super.

### Tip

Different FHS providers offer different interest rates. You can switch your FHS to another provider to get a higher interest rate.

There is quite a bit of paperwork involved and a few things you need to be aware of, including:

- You can only withdraw the full amount, then you'll have six months to buy.
- Once you buy your home or have finished building it, you'll need to live in it for at least six months and move in within the first 12 months after buying it.
- If you buy a home before the four years are up, you'll need to notify your financial institution within 30 days that you would like the balance paid into your mortgage at the end of the qualifying period. Otherwise it will be transferred to your super. ▶

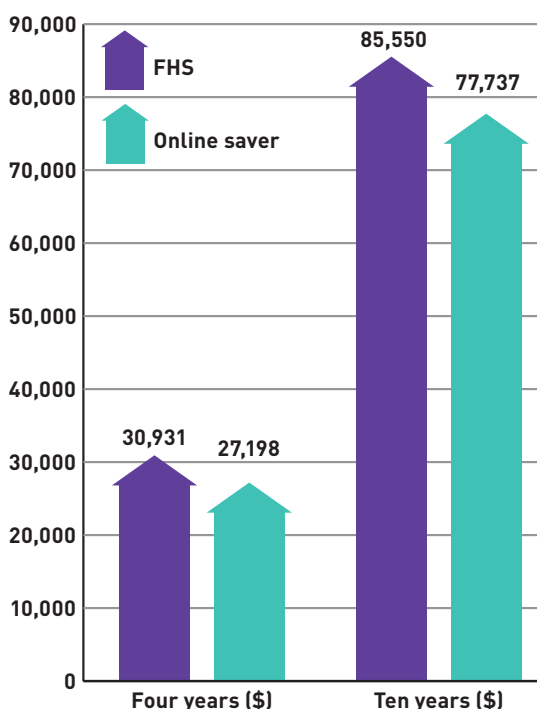
## GOOD HABITS

An FHS account helps people establish the financial habits necessary to pay off a mortgage.

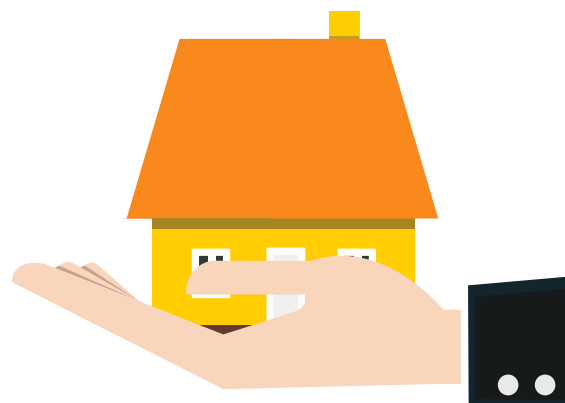
Here's one scenario: Ashley and Tim want to buy an apartment and currently pay \$300 per week in rent. They already have a nest egg of \$20,000 in a high-interest account to cover legal fees.

They both open a FHS account and each save \$120 per week. After four years they've each saved almost \$31,000. Together they have a 20% deposit for a \$300,000 apartment. Once they buy their home, they can divert regular savings and rent into their mortgage and can comfortably pay it off, even if interest rates go up.

### FHS vs high-interest online accounts



**Note:** Savings of \$120 per week deposited into a FHS account with a 3.25% interest rate (plus the 17% government contribution) compared with a 4.26% interest rate for the high-interest online savings account. Some FHS accounts pay a higher interest rate, which would mean the difference can be even greater. *Source:* Canstar.



### INTEREST RATE BASED ON \$1000 ACCOUNT BALANCE

|                                | Interest rate (%) |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Police Bank (A)                | 4.15 (B)          |
| Railways Credit Union (A)      | 3.9               |
| IMB                            | 3.82 (C)          |
| Teachers Mutual Bank (A)       | 3.5               |
| Credit Union SA                | 3.5               |
| ME Bank                        | 3.25              |
| Hunter United Credit Union     | 3 (D)             |
| Victoria Teachers Mutual Bank  | 3                 |
| AMP Bank                       | 2.5               |
| Hume Building Society          | 2.5               |
| Wyong Council Credit Union (A) | 2.5 (E)           |
| BankVic (A)                    | 2.06 (F)          |

**Note:** Interest rate based on \$1000 account balance.

*Source:* Canstar, 29 November 2013.

(A) Restricted membership for employees of specific industries, their families and (sometimes) friends.

(B) 0.5% for balances below \$500.

(C) 0% interest if no deposit is made in the month.

(D) Exit and transfer fee of \$30.

(E) Transfer fee of \$30; 0% for balances below \$1000.

(F) 2.65% for balances above \$4999.

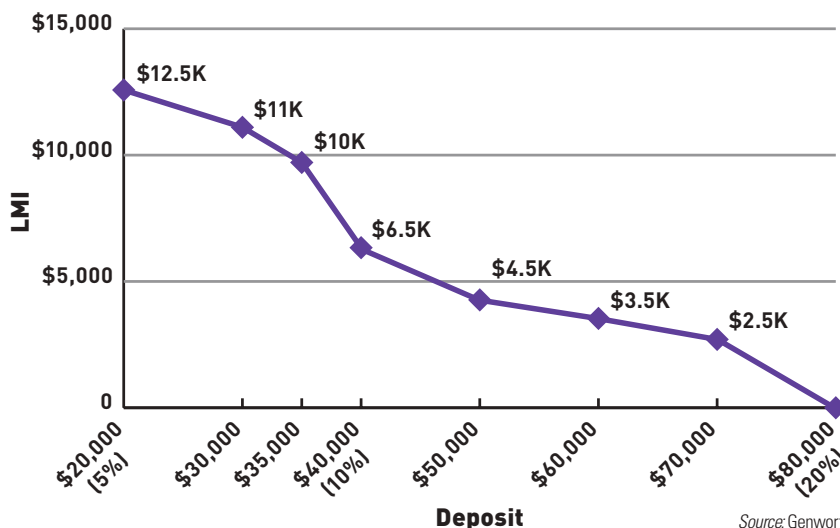
## Inequitable insurance

If you don't have at least a 20% deposit, you're normally required to take out lender's mortgage insurance (LMI). This protects the lender if you default on the loan and your home is sold for less than your loan amount. But you're still not absolved from the debt - the insurer can come after you. There is no refund if you switch lenders. ■

**Tip**

Making a larger deposit can make a big difference. Depending on the amount you borrow, an extra \$5000 deposit can potentially save you up to \$3000 or more in LMI (see graph, right). ■

### LMI required on a \$400,000 first-home loan (if deposit less than 20%)



*Source:* Genworth



# Happy feet

**Karina Bray** helps you find your feet, with tips for buying foot-care products and shoes as well as preventing osteoarthritis

**F**eet are a bit of an afterthought for some of us, but if you do right by them they'll do right by you as the years pass. From the right foot expert to the best foot products, there's plenty to consider when it comes to putting your best foot forward.

## Know your foot experts

- **Podiatrists** are allied health professionals dedicated to the diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of foot problems – including corns, bunions and ulcers, as well as lower limb biomechanical-related injuries. Other services include gait analysis and prescribing orthotics. You don't need a referral to see a podiatrist, but

some services attract a Medicare rebate. Your GP can tell you if you qualify.

- **Orthopaedic surgeons** specialise in musculoskeletal injuries and conditions, such as arthritis. Some go on to specialise in foot and ankle surgery, and can become members of the Australian Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society.
- **Pedorthists** and **orthotists** prescribe and make orthoses.
- Other allied health professionals who deal with feet, ankles and knees are **physiotherapists**, **occupational therapists**, **chiropractors** and **osteopaths**.

## 10 POPULAR FOOT PRODUCTS

There are all sorts of foot-care products in the pharmacy and health store, but which ones are worth buying, and which should you avoid?



### RECOMMENDED

#### Non-medicated callus and corn

**cushions** These donut-shaped pads can help provide relief from pressure on corns and calluses. To get rid of corns, soak your feet in warm water for 20 minutes and rub away the softened, dead skin with an emery board, pumice stone or rough wash cloth. If they keep recurring, consider changing your shoe style.

**Moleskin** Made of cotton flannel and with an adhesive backing, moleskin provides protection against the friction that causes corns, calluses, bunions and blisters. It tends to stay in place better than Band-Aids, even when wet from sweat, rain or puddles, and it's often recommended for running and hiking.

**Foot powders** can help with smelly, sweaty feet, and tend to be better than sprays.

**Heel balms** More than just a moisturiser for relieving dry, cracked heels, these often contain ingredients that exfoliate dead skin cells, leaving skin softer and smoother.



### TRY IT

#### Foot files

Used for scraping off hardened skin, go easy with them and don't scrape until you bleed! A pumice stone is gentler.

**Orthoses** Non-prescription orthoses are worth trying before you buy prescription ones, which can cost hundreds of dollars. They may provide support and cushioning for feet which, in turn, may help with a sore back and knees – although this isn't backed up by studies. If you have fallen arches or flat feet, look for orthoses with arch support. For ongoing problems, consult a podiatrist. ▶

**22**

foot bones at birth

**45**

foot bones at school age

**26**

foot bones in adulthood



## **X USE AT OWN RISK** **Callus and corn removers**

Preparations containing salicylic acid, including paint-on liquids and medicated pads, should be avoided except under professional supervision; especially by people with circulation problems caused by diabetes, for example. They may damage surrounding skin and cause infection.

**Plantar wart remover** Like a corn and callus remover, a wart remover can damage surrounding skin, causing infection.

**Detox foot pads** These stick-on patches, which claim to absorb toxins from your body through your feet while you sleep, just don't work.

**Magnetic ankle support** Elastic bandages with small magnets are safe to use, but there's no convincing evidence they offer therapeutic benefit above and beyond the support from the bandage itself. Save your money and get the cheaper, magnet-free one.

## **TREAT PLANTAR WARTS**

A common home remedy recommended by some medical professionals is coloured duct tape – cover the wart with a piece of duct tape 24 hours a day, six days a week, for six weeks. Non-medicated, donut-shaped pads can help relieve pressure.

## **Back to school**

**G**iven that children spend more than six hours a day in their school shoes, getting a good pair is important not only for their day-to-day comfort, but also for their foot development longer term. Ill-fitting school shoes can cause foot, knee and posture problems in adolescence and beyond. At birth, babies have 22 soft, partially formed bones in their feet.

By school age, the number of bones increases to 45, and they start to harden and fuse through late childhood and adolescence. At this stage, ill-fitting shoes can interfere with the process, causing malformations in the completed bone set of 26 at the age of about 18. Even buying shoes too big – so that kids can “grow into them” – can cause problems by changing the way a child walks.

A good school shoe:

- is flexible, but supportive – it should bend enough at the toe end of the foot to accommodate normal flexing when walking, but not bend in half, and there should be some resistance if you try to twist it between the heel and toe
- weighs about 250g – some are much heavier than this
- has no more or no less than one thumb-width of space between the end of the big toe and the shoe
- offers support for running and jumping on concrete and bitumen
- doesn't have to be expensive – a more expensive shoe may last all year, but your child may grow out of it first. For younger kids with fast-growing feet, there are plenty of less expensive options that still meet the above criteria.

## **Find the right sports shoes**

**T**he type of shoe you buy will depend on the sport you're using it for; running shoes and court shoes have different characteristics because of the different movements and forces involved. Then there's your running motion, and whether

you hit the ground first with your heel or midfoot/toe, and the degree of foot pronation (how much, if at all, your foot rolls inward). High-tech foot scanners and gait analysers can help determine the best shoe to suit your characteristics, but are dependent upon the skills of the person interpreting the information.

Podiatrist Paul Bowles says most people need a stable sports shoe, and suggests the following tests to check for stability:

- Running shoes should flex at the toe, but not in the middle, whereas tennis



## Staving off osteoarthritis

**O**steoarthritis is a loss of or damaged joint cartilage (cushioning between the bones), and commonly affects knees and hips, but also the foot and ankle. It's a major cause of pain and disability, affecting more than one in three people over 60 – although younger people get it too.

There's no cure for osteoarthritis, so treatment focuses on managing symptoms with painkillers, exercise and physical therapy. When pain and disability severely affect your quality of life, joint-replacement surgery may be the best option.

Recent research into the effects of shoes and orthoses shows promising evidence that simply changing your footwear can help prevent the further deterioration of arthritic knees.

The flexible, minimalist footwear worn by "barefoot" runners may not be a panacea for running injuries (see below), but studies have found that such shoes appear to help people with knee arthritis by changing the way they walk and therefore the loading on the knee joint, which in turn reduces pain.

Orthoses may be helpful for foot and ankle arthritis, but there's little evidence

shoes should be stiff at the toes but flex in the middle.

- The heel counter (the bit at the back of the shoe where your heel sits) should be firm where it connects to the shoe.
- Hold the heel and toe and try twisting the shoe – it should be fairly rigid.
- The heel should be positioned slightly higher than the front of the shoe.

Shoes designed to provide the feel of barefoot running don't meet these criteria. But even though there's no evidence they live up to claims of enhanced performance or preventing injuries, some people prefer to run in them.

that over-the-counter orthotics are effective for knee osteoarthritis.

Research into the role of footwear in managing arthritis is still in its infancy, but there are other measures you can take to protect your joints and minimise the painful symptoms:

- **Regular, gentle exercise** helps keep joints mobile and build muscle to support joints. Losing excess weight can reduce stress on knees and hips.
- **Medications** Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as aspirin and ibuprofen, can help reduce pain and inflammation. Topical NSAIDs, such as Diffiam or Voltaren gel, can also help if the pain is localised in a small area, and reduces the risk of gastrointestinal effects.
- **Heat and cold packs** or a warm damp towel can relax and soothe stiff joints,

## The flexible footwear worn by 'barefoot' runners... appears to help people with knee arthritis

while cold packs can help with acute pain and swelling.

- **Mechanical aids** A cane, crutch or walker can help take weight off joints, while an elasticised knee brace may decrease symptoms.
- **Cortisone injections** can reduce pain, inflammation and swelling, and last months. You may experience pain for a couple of days after the injection, and there's a risk of damage to tendons,

## SHOES FOR AGEING FEET

**A**s we age, our feet change too, with tendons and ligaments losing their elasticity and ability to "spring back". This can result in feet gaining half a shoe size or more, as arches lower and the foot becomes flatter and longer, and perhaps also wider. We also lose the fat padding on the sole, and by the age of 50 we've lost up to half the shock-absorbing ability of the foot pad.

Sturdy, well-cushioned shoes with a firm sole, low heel, soft upper and plenty of room in the toe box are ideal for all feet, but especially older feet. Have your feet remeasured when you buy, in case they've changed since last time.

cartilage and bones, so it's not recommended as a first line of treatment or for long-term management.

- **Glucosamine and chondroitin supplements** are inexpensive and safe when taken in recommended doses with only minor side effects, so try them if you wish but stop if there's no relief within three months.

There are a couple of less-invasive procedures that some people try before surgery, but which aren't recommended.

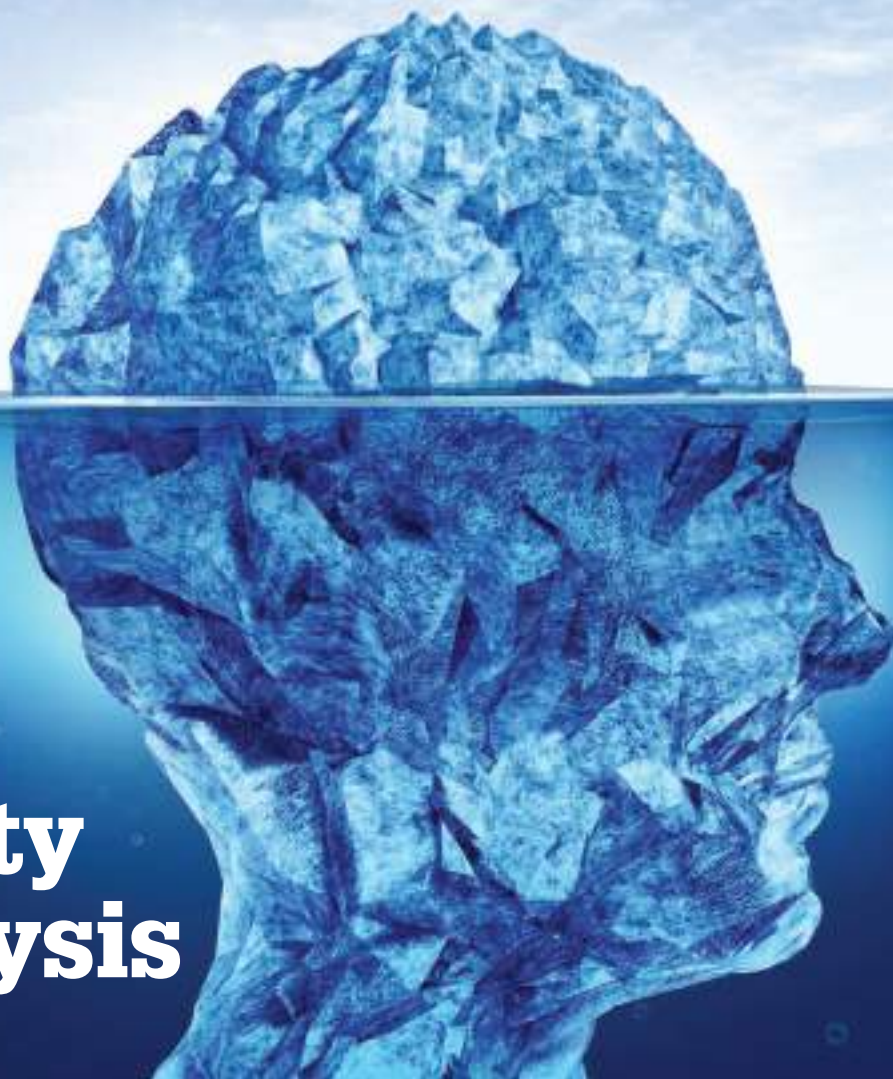
- **Viscosupplementation** Hyaluronic

acid is injected into the joint, but a recent large review of clinical trials found it provides little or no pain relief or increase in function, and there are serious side effects.

- **Arthroscopic surgery** (for knee osteoarthritis) An arthroscope is inserted through a small incision in the skin, and damaged cartilage and bone is removed. But the outcomes are no better than placebo surgery. ■







# Faulty analysis

Is the insurance industry missing the mark when it comes to mental health risks? **Andy Kollmorgen** investigates

**O**ne in two Australians will face a mental health issue at some point in their lives. However, the insurance industry's indiscriminate approach to risk assessment can mean the denial of cover, higher premiums or rejected claims, even if the illness is under control.

Insurance companies don't seem to know how to deal with the complexities of mental health, so they tend to assign a high level of risk to people with mental illness without taking individual circumstances into account. This longstanding problem has been well documented, including recently in a large-scale project by the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) and beyondblue. Their 2011

report found many people who have experienced mental illness have a hard time qualifying for cover and lodging successful claims, particularly when it comes to income protection and life insurance.

The research also revealed that customer service reps can handle the matter insensitively during the application process, asking questions such as "are you currently suicidal or do you have plans to commit suicide within the next 12 months?" About 60% of the 424 survey respondents had faced denial of cover, exclusion of mental illness claims or higher premiums. The insurance industry as a whole relies on "broad and often stigmatised assumptions" about mental illness, the report concluded.

Recognition that the insurance industry should take a more nuanced approach to assessing mental illness risks dates back to at least 1993, when the Australian Human Rights Commission undertook the first National Inquiry into the Human Rights of People Living with Mental Illness. The resulting Burdekin report found that the insurance industry "remains unjustifiably cautious – to the point of discrimination – in its assessments of risk in this area", despite improvements in mental health treatments.

The MHCA and beyondblue have lobbied for change for more than a decade without getting much traction. "Since beyondblue started talks with the insurance industry in 2002 no significant

progress has been made,” CEO Kate Carnell told CHOICE.

## Opposing views

People who work in the insurance industry and mental health advocates tell very different stories about what happens during the application process. According to LifeShield insurance broker Carolyn Wright, applicants who mount a strong argument that the illness is under control stand a better chance of avoiding a mental health exclusion or higher premiums. “We had a client who was contemplating suicide 10 years ago and recently had a temporary relapse, but he still got full cover income protection with no mental health exclusion,” she says.

And Wright maintains that income protection insurers take people’s circumstances into account when assessing risk. “One of the most critical things they look at is whether you’ve recently missed any days of work due to a mental health issue, or if you’re currently off work. They won’t cover you in these cases, because there’s too much risk for the insurer. You might also be denied cover if you’re at the start of treatment and showing signs of not being able to control the issue, such as changing medications frequently.” In Wright’s view, the underwriting and assessment process “is very fair and reasonable as long as the case is presented correctly and a true and complete picture is painted”.

A spokesperson for the insurer TAL also told us applicants are assessed individually. “The factors considered in the underwriting process include the severity and nature of the illness, the number of episodes, the duration of those episodes, the amount of time off work, and how long it’s been since the episode occurred. The applicant’s rates may remain standard, they may be excluded for mental health conditions, or they may be declined an application.”

In a recent interview with a financial industry publication, TAL CEO Jim Minto said total and permanent disability (TPD) claims related to mental illness are a prime cause of rising insurance costs and that the industry “has loosened up the definitions and the coverage too

much”. And according to what we’ve heard from mental health advocates – including a recent documentation of case studies provided by the MHCA – insurers regularly knock back applicants who haven’t missed any work due to mental illness but may have received mental health support at some time in their lives. In some cases, a single medical visit for common ailments including stress, insomnia, short-term depression or mild anxiety can be enough for insurers to deny cover or reject a claim, even if the incident occurred more than a decade ago or is ongoing but well managed. Both the MHCA and beyondblue point to a widespread lack of consistency in the ▶

## Travel cover

**M**ental illness is mostly a no-go zone for travel insurers. In a recent Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) dispute involving a denied claim, one travel insurer claimed that mental illness is the third most common reason for trip cancellation or disruption. In our most recent travel insurance review (CHOICE, Dec 13), only four of the 29 brands surveyed covered claims relating to mental illness (such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and postnatal depression). These are:

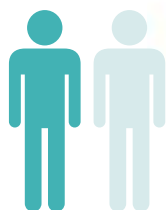
- Cover-more
- CGU
- BUPA
- NRMA

(All but Cover-more are distributed by parent company CGU).

Providing cover is one thing; paying claims is another. The MHCA and beyondblue say they’ve heard from many travel insurance customers who’ve seen their claims rejected because the insurer categorised symptoms such as stress, insomnia and fatigue as individual mental health conditions.

## 1 in 2

Australians will be affected by mental illness in their lifetime



# 20%

the proportion of income protection claims that are mental health related\*\*



## 1 in 5

Australians are affected by mental illness each year



way insurers – including different representatives of the same company – define mental illness. The organisations say they've been contacted by many consumers who say their individual circumstances were not taken into account and that terms such as mental illness "episode" are defined differently.

### A new approach

Industry super fund REST, in partnership with its insurer, AIA, is one of a number of funds that appear to be taking steps to improve services to members with mental health issues – including special training for call centre staff, according to REST CEO Paul Sayer.

"People who've had mental health issues have come in to talk about it, and we've taken the input on board," Sayer told us. The initiative came about in

response to staff not having the skills to appropriately deal with callers in distress, including people in a suicidal state, asking whether their survivors would receive a payout.

year in mental illness-related income protection and TPD claims.

Sayer says REST and other SuperFriend members are making a concerted effort to better understand the complexities of mental health for the

## Group insurers pay out over \$160m a year in mental illness-related claims

REST and AIA are part of the SuperFriend project, a collection of industry super funds and group insurers aimed at improving mental health in the workplace, including making sure workers with mental health issues have enough insurance. A related project, SuperMIND, is aimed at better organising claims data in order to develop a "more detailed understanding of the rate, type and reporting of mental illness-related insurance claims". AIA published a report in August 2013 that said group insurers pay out more than \$160m a

benefit of both employees and employers. "The area that we're paying for in insurance claims is generally around rehab, so we look at how to support people to get them back to work. We're a mutual, so we're here to support our members, not find ways to deny claims."

And the financial services sector has taken other tentative steps forward. In September last year, for instance, the Financial Services Council introduced a new standard calling for member life insurance providers and their reps to undertake mental health awareness education and training.

Wright, who has specialised in finding cover for people who have experienced mental illness, says consumers should be careful when relying on insurance inside industry super. "Automatic cover at a minimum level is included, but you should check

### Stats tell the story

The MHCA and beyondblue's 2011 report, *Mental Health, Discrimination and Insurance: A Survey of Consumer Experiences*, makes a strong case that many people who have experienced mental illness have also experienced discrimination at the hands of the insurance industry

**35%**

of respondents strongly agreed it was difficult for them to obtain any type of insurance as they had experienced mental illness

**67%**

agreed it was difficult to obtain life and income protection insurance

**45%**

said their application for income protection insurance was declined due to mental illness

**50%**

got insurance cover but either paid more or faced exclusions for mental illness claims



the fine print. Consumers may be unaware of what they're getting."

Wright maintains that because commission rates are generally the same across the industry, "brokers wouldn't have any financial reason to recommend one product over". However, retail insurance is generally more expensive than insurance provided by super funds, and you can always talk to your fund manager about increasing or changing your cover.

### Is it legal?

Australian anti-discrimination law allows insurance companies to deny

## The insurance industry's behaviour reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of mental illness

cover to people with disabilities, including mental illness, if the discrimination is reasonable and based on actuarial or statistical data that shows a special degree of risk. But they can also discriminate on the basis of "other relevant factors", including commercial judgement or an applicant's particular circumstances.

The MHCA and beyondblue argue that, even with this legal leeway, the insurance industry may still be breaching anti-discrimination laws because its behaviour reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of mental illness. Both organisations say their numerous requests to the industry for statistical and actuarial data relating to mental illness have gone unheeded, leading them to conclude that its discriminatory behaviour may not be based on reasonable assumptions.

### Can you complain?

According to its terms of reference, the FOS will consider complaints about companies that refuse to provide general insurance (which includes travel and income protection) or impose special restrictions on customers, but only after the customer has tried and failed to resolve the complaint through the company's own dispute process. A FOS

spokesperson explained that the service "has limited jurisdiction in relation to people not being able to get insurance cover, and we don't capture data on people who have been refused coverage".

In any case, people who have experienced mental illness are increasingly turning to FOS to help them resolve financial services disputes. In 2011-12, there were 444 "special assistance" requests (which may have involved insurance as well as other financial services disputes), 26% of which were mental illness related. In 2012-13, there were 530 such requests, 49% of which had to do with mental illness.

"We've had quite an increase across the board," FOS told us.

In cases where customers haven't told an insurer about a pre-existing mental health condition, a FOS complaint is not likely to result in a win. Under the Insurance Contracts Act's "duty to disclose", applicants are required to

reveal everything that may affect the insurer's decision to accept the risk of providing cover. In a July 2013 decision, FOS ruled in favour of a travel insurance provider that denied a claim because the applicant failed to disclose a history of depression, even though the duty to disclose was buried in the fine print of the product disclosure statement (PDS).

The MHCA and beyondblue are urging consumers who believe they've been discriminated against because of a mental health issue to obtain free legal advice through the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), as well as visit [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au) and fill out a "tell us your story" form.\* ■

### INSURANCE SHOPPING TIPS

- **Read the PDS** to find out how the insurer describes a mental health condition or illness and what exclusions, exemptions or extra premiums may apply. If the information isn't clear, call the insurer and press for details.
- **Avoid filling out online forms.** Call the insurer or broker directly so you can explain your circumstances to a real person.
- **Ask the insurer how it defines a mental health condition or illness,** since definitions can vary widely between companies. Some policies may categorise symptoms such as stress, insomnia and fatigue as mental health conditions. Do they assume you have a mental illness if you've seen a counsellor or psychologist?
- **Ask about the data the insurer draws on** for the underwriting process.
- **Ask for a precise definition of phrases** such as "mental health days/absence from work".
- **Check the fine print** if you change your superannuation account due to a change of employment. The insurance cover in your new super account may not allow for mental health claims on any pre-existing health issues. Q-Super, for example, imposes a two-year exclusion for pre-existing conditions and will only pay a significantly reduced benefit for pre-existing conditions for the first seven years of cover.
- **Ask the insurer to provide reasons** if your application or claim is rejected. If you are not satisfied, you may be able to lodge a complaint with the FOS and the Australian Human Rights Commission and seek legal advice through the PIAC.

# Ask the Experts

Got a niggling question our team can help with?

**Q** Your solar update story (CHOICE, Jun 13) says you should estimate the size of the photovoltaic (PV) panel system you need based on power consumed between 9am and 5pm. If I generate 20 units during the day and consume five during the day and 15 at night, do I have zero net cost?

**A** Investigative journalist Zoya Sheftalovich responds:



Zoya Sheftalovich

In general, when it comes to making the most of your solar system you need to be using the units as you produce them. You'll get maximum mileage out of your array if you

produce 20 units during the daylight hours and use those units during daylight hours. If you're using the bulk of your energy at night, when the array is not producing units, then you'll still have energy costs for those units.

For this reason, the Alternative Technology Association suggests getting an array that is of a size that covers your daytime energy usage, and that's not too big for your household's needs. To make the most of your panels, switch as much energy usage to the daytime as you can. Try, for example, running your dishwasher, washing

machine and any other appliances on a timer between 9am and 5pm.

**Q** Having just bought raw chickpeas with "Packed in Australia" on the front of the pack, I looked to see where they were from and it didn't even specify local or imported. Should it?

**A** CHOICE food labelling expert Angela Cartwright responds:

While the Food Standards Code requires that the country of origin be declared for most food products, it doesn't offer guidance on how a manufacturer should make that declaration.

In setting out the labelling requirements, the code says packaged food (such as dried chickpeas) must be labelled with a statement on the packaging that either:

- identifies the country where the food was made, produced or grown; or
- identifies the country where the food was manufactured or packaged; and has words to the effect that the food is constituted from ingredients imported into that country or from local and imported ingredients.

So we think any chickpeas labelled "Packed in Australia"

*Ask us!*

Do you have a question for one of CHOICE's experts? Email us at [asktheexperts@choice.com.au](mailto:asktheexperts@choice.com.au) or write to us at:

Ask the Experts, CHOICE,  
57 Carrington Rd, Marrickville,  
NSW 2204

should also specify whether they are imported or are a mix of local and imported ingredients.

I'd encourage you to ask your state or territory food authority to investigate this claim, and CHOICE will do

some investigating of our own to see what other products might be failing the labelling requirements.



Angela Cartwright

**Q** How viable is having health insurance when Medibank Private (for instance) won't provide any benefit if fees charged by practitioners exceed the Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) recommended fees by more than \$500? Most specialists charge in line with the AMA fee schedule, which recommends fees well in excess of the MBS schedule.

**A** CHOICE journalist Uta Mihm responds: Health insurers give some cover for fees that exceed MBS recommended fees. Medicare pays 75% of the MBS fee if you're privately insured, and the

insurer usually pays 25%, leaving you to pay the amount in excess of the MBS fee (the gap).

However, certain hospitals or specialists and health insurers have gap agreements, which can result in insurers paying more and you paying less. If your specialist agrees to cover you under a "no gap" scheme, you'll have no out-of-pocket costs, as the insurer will cover the gap. If they cover you under a "known gap" scheme, your insurer pays a higher benefit and sets a cap on the gap (such as \$500 for Medibank). Ask your doctor if they have a gap agreement with your fund, as they can choose to participate on a case-by-case basis. ■



Uta Mihm

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

# On Test

Steam mops, espresso machines and electric bikes – they're all here

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It's full steam ahead with these handy cleaners

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Making the most of your microwave's manual

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What kind of home brewer are you?

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Our picks cover all bases for your induction cooktop

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No more uphill battles

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Give a big hand to these recommended products

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Figuring out the configurations with our home-tester family

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Beat the BYO-tech blues with this handy guide

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Say goodbye forever to the paper trail

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Become a master of the snappy selfie

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Essential for any DIY-er

CHOICE's Matthew Steen has a bubbly personality

### CHOICE

#### CHOICE'S

experienced technical staff puts products through their paces in our own testing laboratories. We use test methods based on Australian standards and develop our own to match the way consumers use a product in their homes. We buy the products we test, maintaining our independence from manufacturers and so we know what you're faced with in the shops. We've checked the models are available at the time we publish. Our recommendations are based on a product's quality and performance, with no hidden bias.



#### CHOICE Shopper

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#### CHOICE Best Buy

Our testers award a product a Best Buy if it delivers high quality at a comparatively low price. Not every test report includes Best Buys.



#### CHOICE Green Buy

Our researchers award a Green Buy to a product that delivers good quality and environmental performance. Not every test report includes Green Buys.





## Full of steam

Steam mops make short work of cleaning, but which features are a must, asks **Rebecca Ciaramidaro**

**S**team mops are an effective way to clean your home, and more and more people are going for them over a mop and bucket. Using only water to clean, they work by heating the water inside the reservoir to create steam that is pumped out of the cleaning head. The steam loosens dirt and grime while wetting a microfibre pad underneath the cleaning head, which wipes it away. Many claim to kill bacteria and germs, but we didn't test for this.

Our tester, Matthew Tung found all steam mops on test are very good for general cleaning on hard floors. However, they aren't as impressive when it comes to stain removal. Matthew applied six different household substances – mustard, coffee, red wine, soy

sauce, tomato sauce and black shoe polish – to a vinyl floor in a set pattern and let them dry overnight. He removed any excess with a wet sponge, only leaving behind the dried residue for the steam mops to tackle. All models on test are borderline to OK for stain removal, although keep in mind this is dependent on the flooring you have, as some stains soak more easily into certain types of floors over others.

As in our previous test, we found that steam mops handle soy sauce stains well, but mustard stains poorly. In this test, they also didn't work well on coffee stains. But while they aren't perfect, steam mops remove stains better than a mop and bucket.

All the mops on test do their main job – cleaning hard floors – very well, so all are recommended

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

**A water tank** that is removable and can be refilled while cleaning without first having to turn it off or let it cool down. The capacity of the water tanks for the steam mops on test range from 250mL to 1L.

**Cleaning pads** are usually microfibre to trap and carry away the dirt. Most come with more than one pad, which is handy for swapping over during a long cleaning job, or if one is in the wash when you want to do some steam cleaning. Clean the cloth after each use.

**Carpet glider attachment** lets you use the mop on carpet. It's handy for refreshing carpets, but for heavy soiling or stains you'll need a heavy-duty steam cleaner (or carpet shampoo).

**Pad rest** so you can safely stand the mop during cleaning. Without one you shouldn't leave the mop standing (while on) in one place for long – build-up of heat and steam could damage the floor.

**A telescopic wand** lets you adjust the wand to suit your height.

**The power cord** should allow good reach from the power point.

**Accessory tools** such as a handheld tool, jet nozzle or brush allow you to clean grout, shower cubicles and other areas.

**Steam ready indicator** lets you know when the steam mop is ready to use.

**Steam on lock switch** activates continuous steam flow so you don't have to hold down the button to keep the steam coming.

**Steam off lock switch** helps prevent accidentally turning on the steam flow. Only the Karcher has this feature.

**Heat-up time** If you want to quickly get your steam mop out, you'll want it to heat up quickly. Heat-up times vary from 20 seconds to six minutes.

**Time in use** You want it to last until you've finished cleaning.

Time in use ranges from seven to 22 minutes.



Matthew Tung

## WHAT TO BUY\*

1. **75% Monster**  
Superclean EZ2 \$329
2. **74% Black & Decker**  
Steam-mop Deluxe  
FSM1630-XE \$249
3. **73% Bissell**  
Powerfresh 1440-F \$269
4. **73% Dirt Devil** Easy Steam  
Express II DDSTM1500 \$99
5. **73% Haan** Multi SI-A70 \$199
6. **73% Shark** Pro Steam Pocket  
Mop S3601NZ \$250



7. **73% Smart Living**  
Sonic 7128 \$349
8. **73% Vax** Steam  
Multi Master  
VSTD001600 \$169
9. **72% Bissell**  
Lift-Off Steam  
Mop 23B6-F \$349
10. **72% Kenwood**  
Ariete SC2705 \$165
11. **71% Hoover**  
5630 Heritage  
12100081 \$169
12. **71% Piranha** Aqua  
Force Steam Mop  
900158 NV-608 \$49

All the mops on test do their main job – cleaning hard floors – very well, so all are recommended. Many have removable water containers and can be filled up at the tap and on-the-go. The water containers of the **Dirt Devil**, **Monster Superclean EZ2**, **Piranha Aqua Force**, **Shark** and **Smart Living** models can't be removed so they aren't as easy to fill. You'll need to fill them slowly to avoid spilling, then release the pressure and wait for five to 10 minutes before you can fill the Monster and Piranha.

They're all quite easy to move along the floor, except for the **Bissell Lift-Off**, which is the heaviest on test, and the **Hoover 5630 Heritage**, which becomes tiring to use after moving the head and holding the steam button at the same time.

The **Kenwood Ariete SC2705**, **Monster**, **Piranha**, **Black & Decker**,

**Haan**, **Dirt Devil**, **Shark** and **Smart Living** models have steam-on lock controls, which conveniently lock in position while cleaning the floor. You'll need to hold the trigger of the **Vax Steam Multi Master**, **Bissell** and **Hoover** models while cleaning, although this normally isn't tiring except in the case of the Hoover. The rest have their controls located on the body of the mop, so you'll need to bend down to operate them.

The **Kenwood** and **Piranha** are the only models that leave a fair bit of residual water behind after cleaning. The rest leave little water behind.

The **Haan**, **Vax** and **Bissell Lift-Off** can also be used as a handheld steamer. The **Haan** comes with a jet nozzle and nylon brush, the **Vax** has a window cleaner, jet nozzle and nylon brush, and the **Bissell** has a window

cleaner and nylon brush. All their attachments work well, however we found the steam output in the **Haan** to be a bit weak. The **Shark** also comes with a jet nozzle that works well, but it can only be used on the floor as it doesn't have a handheld option.

The **Shark** comes with a two-sided flip mop head that allows you to clean double the surface area before you have to change the mop pad. The **Black & Decker** has a steam burst feature, the **Smart Living** has a sonic mode and the **Kenwood** has a turbo brush on the front; they all claim to help remove stubborn stains. The **Monster** has a separate container in which you can put sanitising agent that is released during cleaning, and the **Bissell Powerfresh** comes with two fragrance discs to add scent to cleaning. ▶

|                                                       | COST       | PERFORMANCE       |                               |                          |                       |      | FEATURES      |                 |                      |               |            |                  |                       |                      |                       |                     | SPECIFICATIONS |           |                      |                        |                   |                       |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------|---------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
|                                                       | Price (\$) | Overall score (%) | Hard floor cleaning score (%) | Stain cleaning score (%) | Ease of use score (%) | Type | Carpet glider | Telescopic wand | Removable water tank | Handheld tool | Jet nozzle | Refill on-the-go | Steam ready indicator | Steam on lock switch | Steam off safety lock | Low-water indicator | Weight (kg)    | Reach (m) | Measured wattage (W) | Heat-up time (min:sec) | Time in use (min) | Contact               |  |
| Monster EZ1                                           | 249        | 78                | 90                            | 63                       | 69                    | S    | ✓             | ✓               |                      |               |            |                  | ✓                     | ✓                    |                       |                     | 2.8            | 7.0       | 1200                 | 3:30                   | 13                | euromflex.com.au      |  |
| Kenwood Ariete Steam Mop SC4160                       | 149        | 75                | 80                            | 62                       | 76                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                |                       | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 3.2            | 5.5       | 1500                 | 0:30                   | 13                | kenwood-australia.com |  |
| • Monster Superclean EZ2                              | 329        | 75                | 80                            | 57                       | 77                    | S    | ✓             | ✓               |                      |               |            |                  | ✓                     | ✓                    |                       |                     | 3              | 6.8       | 1180                 | 1:40                   | 16                | euromflex.com.au      |  |
| • Black & Decker Steam-mop Deluxe FSM1630-XE          | 249        | 74                | 80                            | 63                       | 70                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 2.9            | 7.0       | 1410                 | 1:25                   | 11                | blackanddecker.com.au |  |
| Home Hero Steam Mop BS290 (12100065)                  | 49         | 74                | 80                            | 57                       | 74                    | S    | ✓             |                 |                      |               |            | ✓                |                       |                      |                       |                     | 1.8            | 4.3       | 1310                 | 0:30                   | 15                | godfreys.com.au       |  |
| Karcher SC3.000                                       | 299        | 74                | 80                            | 60                       | 73                    | C    |               |                 |                      | ✓             | ✓          |                  | ✓                     |                      | ✓                     |                     | 4.6            | 8.3       | 1500                 | 6:00                   | 18                | karcher.com.au        |  |
| Piranha Steam Mop 900121 JJB-603                      | 50         | 74                | 80                            | 58                       | 75                    | S    |               | ✓               |                      |               |            |                  |                       | ✓                    |                       | ✓                   | 2.7            | 5.3       | 800                  | 2:30                   | 10                | hegroup.com.au        |  |
| Vax Steam Hard Floor Master VSTM1500                  | 149        | 74                | 80                            | 60                       | 74                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 3.4            | 8.6       | 1340                 | 0:30                   | 13                | vax.com.au            |  |
| • Bissell Powerfresh 1440-F                           | 269        | 73                | 80                            | 53                       | 75                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                | ✓                     |                      |                       | (B)                 | 3              | 7.2       | 1460                 | 0:35                   | 15                | bissell.com.au        |  |
| • Dirt Devil Easy Steam Express II DDSTM1500          | 99         | 73                | 80                            | 57                       | 72                    | S    | ✓             |                 |                      |               |            | ✓                |                       | ✓                    |                       | ✓                   | 2.1            | 5.6       | 1330                 | 0:25                   | 10                | dirtdevil.com.au      |  |
| • Haan Multi SI-A70                                   | 199        | 73                | 80                            | 58                       | 72                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    | ✓             |            | ✓                |                       | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 3.2            | 7.9       | 1100                 | 0:40                   | 22                | haanaustralia.com.au  |  |
| • Shark Pro Steam Pocket Mop S3601NZ                  | 250        | 73                | 80                            | 58                       | 72                    | S    | ✓             |                 |                      |               | ✓          | ✓                |                       | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 2.8            | 7.9       | 1440                 | 0:25                   | 18                | myer.com.au           |  |
| • Smart Living Sonic 7128                             | 349        | 73                | 80                            | 55                       | 72                    | S    | ✓             |                 |                      |               |            | ✓                |                       | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 3.5            | 7.3       | 1470                 | 1:30                   | 19                | exception.com.au      |  |
| • Vax Steam Multi Master VSTDUO1600                   | 169        | 73                | 80                            | 47                       | 78                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    | ✓             | ✓          | ✓                |                       |                      |                       | (B)                 | 3              | 7.1       | 1410                 | 0:25                   | 13                | vax.com.au            |  |
| Bissell Healthy Home Steam Mop Max 1957-F             | 259        | 72                | 80                            | 55                       | 70                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                | ✓                     |                      |                       | (B)                 | 3.7            | 6.0       | 1430                 | 0:30                   | 12                | bissell.com.au        |  |
| • Bissell Lift-Off Steam Mop 23B6-F                   | 349        | 72                | 80                            | 58                       | 68                    | S    |               |                 | ✓                    | ✓             |            | ✓                | ✓                     |                      |                       | (B)                 | 4.5            | 7.6       | 1400                 | 0:40                   | 18                | bissell.com.au        |  |
| Hoover Enhanced Clean Disinfecting Steam Mop HSTM1500 | 279        | 72                | 80                            | 58                       | 68                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                | ✓                     |                      |                       | (B)                 | 3.5            | 8.6       | 1340                 | 0:30                   | 13                | godfreys.com.au       |  |
| • Kenwood Ariete SC2705                               | 165        | 72                | 80                            | 53                       | 71                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 3.7            | 5.3       | 1470                 | 0:20                   | 11                | kenwood-australia.com |  |
| • Hoover 5630 Heritage 12100081                       | 169        | 71                | 80                            | 57                       | 65                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                |                       |                      |                       | (B)                 | 3.3            | 6.6       | 1470                 | 0:25                   | 10                | godfreys.com.au       |  |
| OptimPlus Steam Clean SC263 (12100069)                | 129        | 71                | 80                            | 60                       | 64                    | S    | ✓             |                 | ✓                    |               |            | ✓                | ✓                     |                      |                       | (B)                 | 3.0            | 6.6       | 1370                 | 0:30                   | 17                | godfreys.com.au       |  |
| • Piranha Aqua Force Steam Mop 900158 NV-608          | 49         | 71                | 80                            | 55                       | 68                    | S    |               | ✓               |                      |               |            |                  |                       | ✓                    |                       | ✓                   | 2              | 4.9       | 900                  | 1:50                   | 9                 | hegroup.com.au        |  |
| Thane H2O Mop X5 (A)                                  | 148        | 71                | 80                            | 55                       | 68                    | S    | ✓             |                 |                      | ✓             | ✓          | ✓                | ✓                     | ✓                    |                       | (B)                 | 2.4            | 6.4       | 1250                 | 0:20                   | 7                 | danozdirect.com.au    |  |

**USING THE TABLE** Price Recommended retail, as of December 2013. **Scores** The overall score is made up of hard floor cleaning performance (50%), stain cleaning performance (20%) and ease of use (30%). **Features** See What to Look For, page 46. **TABLE NOTES** • Newly tested. (A) From Danoz Direct. (B) Clear tank. S Stick. C Canister.





## Conquering the waves

Mastering your microwave's manual will make you king or queen of the kitchen, says **Martha Psiroukis**

**D**o you only use your microwave for reheating the forgotten coffee, yesterday's meal or that last-minute dinner idea of a defrosted chicken? If so, you're underusing it. Most microwaves these days offer many auto cook and sensor cook/reheat functions that can make cooking a breeze. We strongly recommend you make time to read your new microwave's manual to get the most out of it and avoid a partially cooked chook while defrosting, an overflow of reheated coffee or an exploding egg.

Helpful features common to many modern-day microwaves include on-screen prompts or recipe guides for auto cook and reheat menus. A quick reference user guide inside the door can also be helpful. But take note that not all sensors are equal – check our table (page 50) for the models that perform best.

A typical microwave's magnetron (the gizmo that creates the microwaves) at, say,

### Nutshell

- Microwaves now have plenty of functions, so read your manual carefully to take full advantage of them.
- Inverter technology doesn't always mean better performance.

50% power will cycle between being on at full power and completely off for 50% of the cooking time. Inverter technology continuously uses 50% power for the whole cooking time – so no on/off power cycling and (at least in theory) more even heating of your food. But while inverter technology may sound impressive, in practice we've found it doesn't always guarantee top performance.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

**Visibility** A bright interior light and large, transparent viewing window let you check your food as it cooks. Many models on test have poor visibility through the door. Where possible, ask the store to power up the microwaves you're considering to check your visibility. The recommended models (page 50) are best for this.

**Controls** Look for easy-to-use controls and good instructions on the display. Some have a quick access user guide inside the door, which can also help.

**Cleaning** Check there aren't too many holes or gaps inside the microwave, or crevices on the outside, that might trap food and grease. Stainless steel exteriors are harder to keep clean.

**Size** Check to make sure your cooking dishes will fit into the microwave. Ideally there should be about 10cm of space around the outside of the oven for ventilation, plus 20cm above it, usually where the vent is located.

**Automatic functions** prompt you to enter the weight and type of food for the microwave to calculate the cooking time.

**Quick boost/start** is a one-touch start option. With most microwaves, the cooking time increases in one- or half-minute increments if you press the button again.

**Time-adjust during cooking** allows you to increase or decrease the time programmed during cooking.

**Sensor programs** take automatic functions one step further by measuring vapours emitted during cooking in order to control the cooking time.

**Multi-stage programming** allows you to perform a sequence of functions, such as defrost, cook and then leave to stand.

**Child safety lock** means you must push a sequence of buttons to deactivate the microwave. ▶



## WHAT TO BUY



**\$229**

### 87% Sharp R350YS

#### Good points

- Excellent for defrosting mince and chicken and reheating a solid food manually
- Very good for cooking broccoli
- Very easy to use
- Easy to clean
- Power is adjustable during cooking
- Controls are easy to understand
- Sensor cook and reheat functions including a melt/soften function
- Comprehensive instructions with recipes
- Quick written function guide inside the door
- Very good visibility through the door during operation

#### Bad points

- Relatively high standby energy use



**\$400**

### 83% Breville BMO634

#### Good points

- Excellent result for defrosting mince and chicken
- Very good for cooking broccoli
- Good for reheating a solid food manually
- Display is bright and clear
- Easy to use
- Good selection of auto cook/reheat and sensor programs
- Comprehensive instructions
- Very good visibility through the door during operation
- Power is adjustable during cooking
- Has a melt/soften function
- The turntable is self locating
- The "beep" volume is adjustable
- Comes in three colours (see table note (A))

#### Bad points

- Control panel can accumulate some grime
- Noisy vibration during cooking when the power cuts in and out
- Cooling fan is also noisy
- Relatively expensive to buy

## PREVIOUSLY RECOMMENDED

For details of microwaves we've previously recommended, refer to the past issue of *CHOICE* as indicated beneath each model number below.

|                                  |              |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 87% LG MS3840SR<br>(Feb 12)      | <b>\$239</b> |
| 86% Sharp R395YS<br>(Feb 12)     | <b>\$299</b> |
| 85% LG MS3840SRSK<br>(Feb 12)    | <b>\$269</b> |
| 82% Samsung ME6104ST<br>(Feb 11) | <b>\$249</b> |



## About the rest

All newly tested models have a stainless steel exterior except the **Breville BMO634** and the **Panasonic NN-ST663W**, which are generally harder to clean and keep clean.

The **Panasonic NN-ST663W** has very comprehensive instructions with recipes, but also poor through-the-door visibility. It doesn't have a quick or boost start, and the cooling fan is noisy.

The **Panasonic NN-ST641W** has a good selection of auto cook and reheat functions, and comprehensive

|                           | COSTS      |                          |                                                       |
|---------------------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
|                           | Price (\$) | Annual standby cost (\$) | Annual cost for reheating plated meal once a day (\$) |
| LG MS3840SR               | 239        | 4.27                     | 11.21                                                 |
| • Sharp R350YS            | 229        | 9.58                     | 11.38                                                 |
| Sharp R395YS              | 299        | 9.28                     | 11.01                                                 |
| LG MS3840SRSK             | 269        | 4.21                     | 11.04                                                 |
| • Breville BMO634 (A)     | 400        | 2.72                     | 10.33                                                 |
| Samsung ME6104ST          | 249        | 4.13                     | 9.65                                                  |
| Breville BMO300           | 230        | 1.44                     | 10.10                                                 |
| • Panasonic NN-ST663W     | 279        | 4.76                     | 9.64                                                  |
| • Panasonic NN-ST641W     | 219        | 4.79                     | 9.58                                                  |
| • Omega OM30X             | 329        | 1.35                     | 8.78                                                  |
| Panasonic NN-ST671S       | 329        | 4.68                     | 9.67                                                  |
| Samsung ME6124ST          | 299        | 2.31                     | 10.63                                                 |
| • Panasonic NN-SD691S     | 359        | 5.16                     | 9.62                                                  |
| • Samsung ME1113TST/XSA   | 329        | 3.22                     | 10.5                                                  |
| Breville BMO100           | 190        | 3.61                     | 9.24                                                  |
| Panasonic NNSF550W        | 249        | 5.11                     | 9.31                                                  |
| • Smeg SA37X              | 690        | 9.08                     | 9.85                                                  |
| • Smeg SA35MX             | 550        | 3.89                     | 9.75                                                  |
| Westinghouse WMG281SF (B) | 489        | 3.40                     | 8.99                                                  |
| • Samsung MS34F606MAT     | 369        | 1.32                     | 11.39                                                 |

**USING THE TABLE** Price Recommended retail, as of December 2013. **Scores** will cook – but it doesn't necessarily give a better result. **Running costs** are (A) The Breville BMO634 is available in black, white and cranberry, and is techni-

instructions with recipes. But it also has poor visibility through the door, no quick start and a noisy cooling fan.

The **Omega** has many auto cook and reheat functions, but it's only OK for visibility and borderline for reheating a solid food.

The **Panasonic NN-SD691S** has keep-warm and melt/soften functions, and very comprehensive instructions with recipes. However, visibility through the door is very poor, and it's only OK at reheating a solid food. Its control panel can accumulate some grime, and its cooling fan is noisy.

The **Samsung ME1113TST/XSA** has a good selection of auto cook, reheat

and sensor functions (including an auto steam function), but only basic instructions. The visibility through the door isn't ideal, and it's borderline for reheating a solid food.

The **Samsung MS34F606MAT** has a good selection of auto cook, reheat and sensor functions, and a very handy function guide inside the door. But it's useless for defrosting mince using the sensor function, although it does an excellent job when defrosting if programmed manually. Visibility through the door is very poor, and it only comes with basic instructions.

The **Smeg SA37X** has comprehensive instructions and a "warm dinner plate"

function, but also very poor visibility through the door, and it's borderline for reheating a solid food manually. It has relatively high standby energy use and is expensive to buy.

The **Smeg SA35MX** has intuitive controls, comprehensive instructions and a "warm dinner plate" function, but poor visibility through the door. It's borderline for manually reheating a solid food, and is relatively expensive to buy.

We also tried testing the **Kambrook KM301**, but the sample we bought was faulty. The power turned on but no cooking or reheating was taking place. We couldn't get a replacement in time for this test. ■

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK



| Performance       |  |                         |                 |                      |                           |                        | Features             |          |                      |           |             |                            |                        |                                 | Specifications             |                     |             |                                               |                                                     |                                     |                      |                       |                                                                                            |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-----------|-------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overall score (%) |  | Cooking performance (%) | Ease of use (%) | Cooking broccoli (%) | Defrosting mince meat (%) | Defrosting chicken (%) | Reheating quiche (%) | Inverter | Sensor cook / reheat | Auto cook | Auto reheat | Adjust time during cooking | Number of power levels | Delayed start or preset cooking | Kitchen timer (standalone) | Multi-stage cooking | Wattage (W) | External dimensions (cm, W x H x D, measured) | Useable cavity dimensions (cm, W x H x D, measured) | Useable shelf (turntable) area (cm) | Volume (L, measured) | Contact               | <div><div>CALL US TODAY</div><div><b>choice</b> SHOPPER</div><div>1300 360 655</div></div> |
|                   |  |                         |                 |                      |                           |                        |                      |          |                      |           |             |                            |                        |                                 |                            |                     |             |                                               |                                                     |                                     |                      |                       |                                                                                            |
| 87                |  | 91                      | 77              | 100                  | 92                        | 90                     | 81                   |          | ✓                    | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     | ✓                               | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 56 x 32 x 43                                  | 40 x 24 x 41                                        | 35                                  | 39                   | lge.com.au            |                                                                                            |
| 87                |  | 90                      | 80              | 80                   | 95                        | 90                     | 93                   | ✓        | ✓                    | ✓         |             | ✓                          | 10                     | ✓                               | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1200        | 52 x 31 x 45                                  | 37 x 22 x 39                                        | 32                                  | 32                   | sharp.net.au          |                                                                                            |
| 86                |  | 90                      | 77              | 100                  | 100                       | 80                     | 81                   | ✓        | ✓                    | ✓         |             | ✓                          | 10                     | ✓                               | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1200        | 52 x 31 x 44                                  | 37 x 24 x 37                                        | 31                                  | 33                   | sharp.net.au          |                                                                                            |
| 85                |  | 89                      | 77              | 100                  | 95                        | 90                     | 70                   |          | ✓                    | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 56 x 32 x 43                                  | 40 x 24 x 41                                        | 35                                  | 39                   | lge.com.au            |                                                                                            |
| 83                |  | 86                      | 77              | 80                   | 100                       | 90                     | 74                   |          | ✓                    | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 52 x 31 x 45                                  | 36 x 24 x 39                                        | 32                                  | 34                   | breville.com.au       |                                                                                            |
| 82                |  | 92                      | 58              | 100                  | 100                       | 90                     | 76                   |          | ✓                    | ✓         |             | ✓                          | 5                      |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1000        | 52 x 30 x 39                                  | 35 x 22 x 35                                        | 30                                  | 27                   | samsung.com.au        |                                                                                            |
| 78                |  | 86                      | 58              | 100                  | 94                        | 90                     | 60                   |          |                      | ✓         | ✓           |                            | 5                      | ✓                               |                            | ✓                   | 1100        | 52 x 32 x 45                                  | 36 x 24 x 39                                        | 30                                  | 34                   | breville.com.au       |                                                                                            |
| 78                |  | 82                      | 68              | 100                  | 74                        | 80                     | 76                   | ✓        | ✓                    |           |             | ✓                          | 10                     | ✓                               | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 53 x 31 x 39                                  | 36 x 24 x 37                                        | 34                                  | 32                   | panasonic.com.au      |                                                                                            |
| 78                |  | 83                      | 66              | 80                   | 90                        | 80                     | 80                   | ✓        |                      | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 6                      | ✓                               | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 53 x 31 x 39                                  | 36 x 24 x 37                                        | 34                                  | 32                   | panasonic.com.au      |                                                                                            |
| 77                |  | 82                      | 64              | 100                  | 94                        | 80                     | 54                   |          |                      | ✓         | ✓           |                            | 5                      |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 900         | 52 x 33 x 44                                  | 34 x 22 x 37                                        | 32                                  | 28                   | omegappliances.com.au |                                                                                            |
| 77                |  | 84                      | 62              | 100                  | 80                        | 90                     | 66                   | ✓        | ✓                    |           |             | ✓                          | 10                     |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 52 x 31 x 39                                  | 36 x 24 x 37                                        | 32                                  | 32                   | panasonic.com.au      |                                                                                            |
| 76                |  | 85                      | 55              | 80                   | 80                        | 90                     | 91                   |          | ✓                    | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1000        | 52 x 30 x 42                                  | 37 x 22 x 37                                        | 30                                  | 30                   | samsung.com.au        |                                                                                            |
| 75                |  | 82                      | 58              | 100                  | 80                        | 80                     | 69                   | ✓        | ✓                    |           |             | ✓                          | 10                     | ✓                               | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 53 x 31 x 40                                  | 36 x 24 x 37                                        | 34                                  | 32                   | panasonic.com.au      |                                                                                            |
| 75                |  | 79                      | 64              | 100                  | 76                        | 90                     | 52                   |          | ✓                    | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 52 x 30 x 39                                  | 36 x 23 x 36                                        | 31                                  | 30                   | samsung.com.au        |                                                                                            |
| 73                |  | 78                      | 61              | 100                  | 68                        | 70                     | 73                   |          |                      | ✓         | ✓           |                            | 5                      |                                 |                            | ✓                   | 900         | 52 x 34 x 43                                  | 33 x 20 x 35                                        | 31                                  | 23                   | breville.com.au       |                                                                                            |
| 71                |  | 75                      | 62              | 100                  | 53                        | 90                     | 58                   | ✓        |                      | ✓         | ✓           |                            | 6                      |                                 | ✓                          |                     | 1000        | 52 x 33 x 41                                  | 36 x 23 x 34                                        | na                                  | 28                   | panasonic.com.au      |                                                                                            |
| 70                |  | 77                      | 52              | 100                  | 76                        | 80                     | 51                   |          |                      | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1000        | 56 x 34 x 47                                  | 37 x 23 x 40                                        | 35                                  | 34                   | smeg.com.au           |                                                                                            |
| 70                |  | 74                      | 62              | 100                  | 72                        | 70                     | 55                   |          |                      | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     | ✓                               | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1000        | 56 x 34 x 44                                  | 38 x 24 x 40                                        | 35                                  | 36                   | smeg.com.au           |                                                                                            |
| 68                |  | 74                      | 53              | 100                  | 70                        | 70                     | 54                   |          |                      | ✓         | ✓           |                            | 5                      | ✓                               |                            | ✓                   | 900         | 51 x 31 x 44                                  | 33 x 23 x 37                                        | 29                                  | 28                   | westinghouse.com.au   |                                                                                            |
| 62                |  | 63                      | 60              | 80                   | 0                         | 80                     | 90                   |          | ✓                    | ✓         | ✓           | ✓                          | 10                     |                                 | ✓                          | ✓                   | 1100        | 52 x 30 x 41                                  | 38 x 22 x 40                                        | 34                                  | 33                   | samsung.com.au        |                                                                                            |

The overall score is made up of cooking (70%, made up of four test scores weighted equally) and ease of use (30%). **Features** See What to Look For, page 49. **Wattage** The higher the wattage, the faster the food based on the energy used to reheat a plated meal everyday at 26 cents per kWh. **TABLE NOTES** • Newly tested. **na** Not applicable – this is a flatbed model without a turntable, so the measurement doesn't apply. cally similar to the BMO743 in stainless steel – the only difference is the colour. **(B)** With grill.

# Home brews

We're spoilt for choice when it comes to making coffee at home, says **Rebecca Ciaramidaro**

**W**ith so many designs, features and technologies on offer, you need to make time for research before you buy an espresso machine. Think about what kind of coffee you're after and which model will give you the results you want.

**Capsule machines** are designed to capture the hearts of instant coffee lovers as well as those who value ease of use. With a variety of brands available at a range of prices, and the increasing availability of these machines

in supermarkets, this category has gone from strength to strength.

**Automatic machines** are for those who want convenience with the ability to experiment with their own beans (see *CHOICE*, Sep 13), while **manual** and **semi-automatic machines** are for those who want the hands-on experience so they can make their coffee exactly how they like it.

## Automatically manual?

Breville has released the first combination espresso machine that claims to provide "the taste benefits of a manual with the simplicity of an automatic". The Oracle automates the trickier parts of the manual process by grinding, dosing and tamping the coffee, as well as frothing milk, while its semi-automatic function controls the volume of espresso poured into your cup. It has a dual boiler, allowing you to make coffee and froth

## Nutshell

- A range of manual, semi-automatic and capsule machines are included in our latest round of testing, priced from \$119 to \$2500.
- We also check out the much-anticipated Breville The Oracle – the first "automatic manual" model.

milk at the same time, as well as an inbuilt grinder. It comes with a hefty price tag of \$2500, which includes an offer from Breville to deliver, set up and demonstrate it in your home. We accepted this offer and used the demonstrator's settings for our test.

The technology behind this machine is impressive. However, the coffee it produced on these settings didn't impress our panel of judges in our taste test (see page 54). They scored it poorly, saying that while it had good crema colour and thickness, it was very hot. It also had limited flavour and was watery with a very bitter aftertaste.

We decided to see if a change in water temperature would make a difference. We lowered the temperature to 91°C (it was set to 93°C by Breville) and the results were noticeably better. If you have a machine like the Oracle that allows you to adjust the temperature you should do so – a couple of degrees can make a big difference, as we discovered. ▶

**\$100m**

The value of the coffee capsule market in July 2013\*





## WHAT TO BUY



\$800

### 82% Breville The Barista Express BES870

#### Good points

- Built-in burr grinder and onboard storage for the tamper
- Drip tray with full indicator
- Even coffee temperature when making consecutive cups of coffee
- Very good controls
- Can accommodate large cups very easily

#### Bad points

- None to mention



\$1500

### 81% Breville The Dual Boiler BES920

#### Good points

- Dual boiler can make coffee and froth milk at the same time
- Programmable power-on
- Drip tray with full indicator
- On-board storage for the tamper
- Very even coffee temperature when making consecutive cups of coffee
- Very good controls
- Can accommodate large cups very easily

#### Bad points

- None to mention



\$149

Best Buy

### 79% Sunbeam Café Espresso II EM3820

#### Good points

- Very even coffee temperature when making consecutive cups of coffee
- Very good controls
- Drip tray with full indicator
- Can accommodate larger cups fairly easily

#### Bad points

- None to mention



\$119

Best Buy

### 78% Sunbeam Piccolo Espresso EM2800

#### Good points

- Very even coffee temperature when making consecutive cups of coffee
- Very good controls

#### Bad points

- Can't accommodate large cups



\$1299

### 70% Nuova Simonelli Oscar Professional

#### Good points

- Very even coffee temperature when making consecutive cups of coffee
- Can accommodate large cups easily

#### Bad points

- Only OK taste test score

### PREVIOUSLY RECOMMENDED

(see *CHOICE*, Feb 13)

|                                    |        |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| <b>80% Sunbeam</b>                 |        |
| Café Series EM6910                 | \$799  |
| <b>79% Breville</b>                |        |
| The Infuser BES840                 | \$550  |
| <b>79% Expobar</b> Office SA       | \$1750 |
| <b>78% Sunbeam</b>                 |        |
| Café Series EM7000                 | \$899  |
| <b>76% Sunbeam</b>                 |        |
| Espresso Vita EM6200               | \$449  |
| <b>75% Sunbeam</b>                 |        |
| Café Crema II EM4820               | \$229  |
| <b>74% La Pavoni</b>               |        |
| Eurobar EBR24A                     | \$795  |
| <b>74% Map</b> Bella               |        |
| S04 Caffitaly System               | \$299  |
| <b>73% Woolworths</b>              |        |
| S14                                | \$99   |
| <b>70% Philips Saeco</b>           |        |
| Poemia HD8327                      | \$349  |
| <b>70% Rancilio</b> Miss Silvia V3 | \$889  |

Best Buy

Best Buy

## ABOUT THE REST

**N**one of the newly tested capsule machines makes our recommended list. They're all borderline for frothing milk, with medium-sized bubbles and hard froth making it difficult to create latte art. The **DeLonghi Nespresso Pixie & Aeroccino 3 EN125.RAE** and **Map Luna Caffitaly System** only scored OK in our taste test, while the **DeLonghi Genio EDG455.B Nescafe Dolce Gusto** scored borderline. The DeLonghi Nespresso & Aeroccino 3 EN110BAE scored poorly in our taste test, with the panel saying it made a weak espresso with a medicinal aftertaste and watery mouthfeel.

The **Gaggia** scored OK in our taste test and poorly for milk frothing. The froth enhancer can't be removed, resulting in large air bubbles that make it impossible to create latte art.

### The **Breville Professional 800 Collection 800ES**

also scored poorly in the taste test. The panel said it had a thin crema with minimal flavour and aroma, as well as a watery mouthfeel and bitter aftertaste.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for a **large-capacity water tank** that's easy to fill, a **large filter basket** that's easy to fill and empty, and an **easy-to-clean drip tray**. Also remember to keep water in the tank fresh.

**Controls** should be easy to use, labelling simple and operation lights clearly visible.

**Milk-frothing mechanism** If you like cappuccinos, lattes or mochas, check our milk-frothing score in the table (right) to see whether it will make creamy froth without large air bubbles.

**An exterior with few cracks and crevices** will be easier to clean. Stainless steel and brushed aluminium take some extra effort.

**Programmable coffee delivery** With semi-automatic machines, this allows you to adjust the amount of coffee in your cup.

**Cup-warming plate** warms up your cups before you make coffee. It's also a good idea to warm the machine for at least 15 minutes prior to use with the group handle in the group head. We recommend warming up the Expobar and other heat-exchanger machines for at least 30 minutes.

**Try out the model** you want to buy. Most shops have an extensive display of espresso machines. Some may offer in-home installation and barista lessons.



|                                                        | Price (\$) | Type |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|
| • Breville The Barista Express BES870                  | 800        | S    |
| • Breville The Dual Boiler BES920                      | 1500       | S    |
| Sunbeam Café Series EM6910                             | 799        | S    |
| Breville The Infuser BES840                            | 550        | S    |
| Expobar Office SA (A)                                  | 1750       | M    |
| • Sunbeam Café Espresso II EM3820                      | 149        | M    |
| Sunbeam Café Series EM7000                             | 899        | S    |
| • Sunbeam Piccolo Espresso EM2800                      | 119        | M    |
| Sunbeam Espresso Vita EM6200                           | 449        | S    |
| Sunbeam Café Crema II EM4820                           | 229        | M    |
| La Pavoni Eurobar EBR24A                               | 795        | M    |
| Map Bella S04 Caffitaly System (B)                     | 299        | C    |
| Woolworths S14 (C)                                     | 99         | C    |
| • Nuova Simonelli Oscar Professional                   | 1299       | M    |
| Philips Saeco Poemia HD8327                            | 349        | M    |
| Rancilio Miss Silvia V3                                | 889        | M    |
| • DeLonghi Nespresso Pixie & Aeroccino 3 EN125.RAE (D) | 289        | C    |
| Electrolux Lavazza A Modo Mio ELM5250S (E)             | 350        | C    |
| Saeco Via Venezia Inox                                 | 499        | M    |
| Breville Café Venezia BES250                           | 200        | S    |
| • Map Luna Caffitaly System (B)                        | 229        | C    |
| DeLonghi Icona ECO310.W                                | 260        | M    |
| • Breville The Oracle BES980                           | 2500       | AM   |
| Bugatti 15-Diva CM                                     | 1000       | M    |
| • DeLonghi Genio EDG455.B Nescafe Dolce Gusto (F)      | 178        | C    |
| • Gaggia Classic II 2013                               | 666        | M    |
| • Breville Professional 800 Collection 800ES           | 400        | M    |
| DeLonghi Lattissima+ EN520.S (D)                       | 528        | C    |
| DeLonghi EC860.M                                       | 645        | S    |
| • DeLonghi Nespresso & Aeroccino 3 EN110BAE (D)        | 249        | C    |
| La Pavoni Stradivari Lusso V230 STL                    | 990        | H    |
| Expressi K-fee (G)                                     | 70         | C    |
| Map S02HS Perfecto Caffitaly System (B)                | 99         | C    |

## MEET OUR EXPERTS

For our taste test we recruit the expert palates of David and Matthew Gee from Barista Basics and our home economist, Fiona Mair. They blind-taste a shot of espresso from each machine, assessing the colour

and thickness of the crema, the aroma, flavour, mouthfeel and aftertaste. Our tester, Peter Horvath, also assesses each machine for ease of use, milk frothing and temperature consistency to get the overall score.



David Gee



Matthew Gee



Fiona Mair



Peter Horvath

| PERFORMANCE       |                      |                       |                         |                                          | FEATURES                              |              |                   |                              | SPECIFICATIONS                  |                            |             |                               |                       |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Overall score (%) | Taste test score (%) | Ease of use score (%) | Milk-frothing score (%) | Coffee temperature consistency score (%) | Automatic power turn-off/standby mode | Cord storage | Cup-warming plate | Programmable coffee quantity | Measured warm-up time (min:sec) | Dimensions (cm, H x W x D) | Weight (kg) | Country/region of manufacture | Contact               |
| 82                | 85                   | 78                    | 80                      | 70                                       | ✓/✓                                   | ✓            | ✓                 | ✓                            | 0:45                            | 41 x 33 x 31               | 10.2        | China                         | breville.com.au       |
| 81                | 80                   | 82                    | 80                      | 100                                      | ✓/✓                                   | ✓            | ✓                 | ✓                            | 2:40                            | 38 x 40 x 38               | 13.7        | China                         | breville.com.au       |
| 80                | 80                   | 77                    | 80                      | 100                                      | ✓/✓                                   | ✓            | ✓                 | ✓                            | 1:35                            | 38 x 33 x 33               | 11.0        | China                         | sunbeam.com.au        |
| 79                | 80                   | 80                    | 70                      | 80                                       | ✓/✓                                   | ✓            | ✓                 | ✓                            | 0:50                            | 34 x 26 x 32               | 7.8         | China                         | breville.com.au       |
| 79                | 75                   | 72                    | 100                     | 100                                      |                                       | ✓            | ✓                 |                              | 4:10                            | 38 x 24 x 45               | 17.4        | Spain                         | expobar.com.au        |
| 79                | 80                   | 72                    | 80                      | 90                                       |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 1:15                            | 32 x 21 x 27               | 5.0         | China                         | sunbeam.com.au        |
| 78                | 75                   | 80                    | 80                      | 90                                       | ✓/✓                                   |              | ✓                 | ✓                            | 1:10                            | 35 x 33 x 38               | 10.9        | China                         | sunbeam.com.au        |
| 78                | 80                   | 70                    | 70                      | 100                                      |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 0:50                            | 30 x 21 x 26               | 4.0         | China                         | sunbeam.com.au        |
| 76                | 75                   | 74                    | 80                      | 90                                       |                                       | ✓            | ✓                 | ✓                            | 0:45                            | 33 x 30 x 32               | 8.0         | China                         | sunbeam.com.au        |
| 75                | 80                   | 74                    | 60                      | 70                                       |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 1:10                            | 32 x 25 x 28               | 6.0         | China                         | sunbeam.com.au        |
| 74                | 75                   | 66                    | 70                      | 100                                      |                                       | ✓            | ✓                 |                              | 1:30                            | 30 x 22 x 27               | 5.4         | Italy                         | euroespresso.com.au   |
| 74                | 80                   | 80                    | 50                      | 40                                       | -/✓                                   |              |                   | ✓                            | 0:50                            | 28 x 17 x 36               | 4.0         | China                         | mapcoffee.com.au      |
| 73                | 75                   | 80                    | 50                      | 80                                       | -/✓                                   |              |                   | ✓                            | 0:50                            | 28 x 17 x 36               | 4.0         | China                         | woolworths.com.au     |
| 70                | 60                   | 72                    | 100                     | 100                                      |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 6:00                            | 39 x 30 x 37               | 15.0        | Italy                         | coffeetailia.com.au   |
| 70                | 75                   | 68                    | 40                      | 100                                      |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 1:20                            | 30 x 20 x 27               | 4.8         | China                         | philips.com.au        |
| 70                | 65                   | 74                    | 90                      | 60                                       |                                       | ✓            | ✓                 |                              | 2:25                            | 35 x 24 x 30               | 12.0        | Italy                         | grinderscoffee.com.au |
| 67                | 65                   | 80                    | 50                      | 80                                       | ✓/-                                   | ✓            |                   | ✓                            | 0:35                            | 24 x 11 x 32               | 2.8         | Switzerland                   | delonghi.com.au       |
| 67                | 70                   | 78                    | 50                      | 40                                       | ✓/-                                   |              |                   | ✓                            | 1:00                            | 25 x 23 x 30               | 4.5         | China                         | electrolux.com.au     |
| 67                | 70                   | 68                    | 40                      | 100                                      |                                       | ✓            | ✓                 |                              | 1:20                            | 32 x 23 x 29               | 7.8         | EU                            | philips.com.au        |
| 63                | 55                   | 76                    | 70                      | 90                                       |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 0:55                            | 33 x 23 x 30               | 6.2         | China                         | breville.com.au       |
| 63                | 60                   | 80                    | 50                      | 70                                       | -/✓                                   |              |                   | ✓                            | 1:00                            | 26 x 14 x 40               | 3.8         | Portugal                      | mapcoffee.com.au      |
| 62                | 55                   | 60                    | 80                      | 100                                      |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 0:45                            | 33 x 26 x 28               | 4.3         | China                         | delonghi.com.au       |
| 60                | 45                   | 82                    | 80                      | 100                                      | ✓/-                                   | ✓            | ✓                 | ✓                            | 3:15                            | 45 x 41 x 38               | 17.1        | China                         | breville.com.au       |
| 60                | 60                   | 68                    | 40                      | 80                                       |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 2:10                            | 38 x 25 x 27               | 7.6         | Italy                         | coffeemachine.com.au  |
| 58                | 50                   | 76                    | 50                      | 100                                      | ✓/-                                   |              |                   | ✓                            | 0:30                            | 30 x 17 x 23               | 2.5         | China                         | delonghi.com.au       |
| 58                | 55                   | 72                    | 40                      | 100                                      |                                       |              | ✓                 |                              | 1:40                            | 36 x 22 x 24               | 7.2         | Romania                       | coffeetailia.com.au   |
| 57                | 45                   | 72                    | 70                      | 100                                      |                                       | ✓            | ✓                 |                              | 1:35                            | 32 x 28 x 30               | 7.3         | China                         | breville.com.au       |
| 57                | 50                   | 78                    | 50                      | 70                                       | ✓/-                                   | ✓            |                   | ✓                            | 0:50                            | 26 x 17 x 33               | 4.5         | Italy                         | delonghi.com.au       |
| 55                | 50                   | 74                    | 40                      | 90                                       | -/✓                                   |              | ✓                 | ✓                            | 0:45                            | 31 x 26 x 33               | 7.7         | China                         | delonghi.com.au       |
| 55                | 45                   | 84                    | 50                      | 70                                       | ✓/-                                   | ✓            |                   | ✓                            | 0:35                            | 25 x 12 x 37               | 2.9         | Hungary                       | delonghi.com.au       |
| 55                | 55                   | 60                    | 60                      | 10                                       |                                       |              |                   |                              | 7:00                            | 33 x 20 x 30               | 5.8         | Italy                         | euroespresso.com.au   |
| 53                | 45                   | 78                    | 50                      | 50                                       | ✓/-                                   |              |                   | ✓                            | 0:35                            | 30 x 15 x 35               | 3.7         | China                         | expressi.com.au       |
| 51                | 35                   | 72                    | 80                      | 80                                       |                                       |              |                   | ✓                            | 1:30                            | 34 x 22 x 26               | 4.7         | China                         | mapcoffee.com.au      |

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## WHAT ABOUT THE WATER?

**W**ater is a key ingredient in making coffee, and its quality can impact the quality of your cup. Teaming high-quality coffee beans that are freshly ground with clean, filtered water should result in a coffee that smells good and has a great flavour and aftertaste too.

The brewing process varies depending on what's in the water, its temperature, how long it's in contact with the coffee and what kind of grind was used in preparing the beans. Always use fresh, filtered water, and keep in mind the best temperature for brewing is around 91-92°C. Water that's too hot or passes through the coffee for too long can result in a bitter flavour, but if water is too cold or passes through the coffee too quickly it can be under-extracted, leaving you with watery coffee that lacks flavour. The correct grind, brewing time and water temperature all help achieve a full-flavoured coffee. ■

**USING THE TABLE** Price Recommended retail, as of December 2013. **Scores** The overall score is made up of taste (60%), ease of use (20%), milk frothing (15%) and coffee temperature consistency when making four consecutive cups of coffee (5%). **Heat-up time** is the time taken to heat the machine to operating temperature (this isn't scored). **Type** **S** Semi-automatic. **M** Manual. **C** Capsule. **AM** Automatic manual. **H** Hand pump. **TABLE NOTES** • Newly tested. **(A)** This model is described on the website as a semi-automatic machine, but we classify it as a manual machine. **(B)** Map Venezia Capsules used. We paid \$6.50 for a pack of 10 capsules. **(C)** Woolworths Select Espresso Roast capsules used. We paid \$6.35 for a pack of 16. **(D)** DeLonghi Nespresso Roma capsules used. We paid \$6.80 for a pack of 10. **(E)** Lavazza Appassionatamente capsules used. We paid \$11.99 for a pack of 16. **(F)** Dulce Gusto Espresso Intenso capsules used. We paid \$7.99 for a pack of 16. **(G)** Expressi Milano capsules used. We paid \$5.99 for a pack of 16.



# Introduction to induction

## We looked at:

- **Bessemer** (induction) 2.2L Saucepan with Lid
- **Circulon** Steel Elite 18cm/2.8L Saucepan
- **Cuisinart** Chef's Ultimate 18cm Covered Saucepan
- **Le Creuset** Cast Iron Saucepan 16cm
- **Le Creuset** 3-ply 16cm Stainless Steel Saucepan
- **Miele** KMSK 1616 16cm Saucepan
- **Scanpan** Induction + 18cm/1.7L Saucepan
- **Tefal** Jamie Oliver Anodised Induction 18cm Saucepan

**Rebecca Ciaramidaro** highlights what to look for when you're shopping for induction cookware

**I**nduction cooktops are an expensive purchase you'll want to get right the first time. The same is true of the cookware that goes with it.

Rather than generating heat, induction cooktops produce a magnetic field just above the glass. This magnetic field then heats the base of the pan. The right induction cookware conducts heat evenly and efficiently, but some base materials achieve this better than others. To see if your existing cookware is compatible with induction, check it has a ferrous base by placing a magnet on it. If this sticks well to the base, you're good to go; otherwise, you'll have to invest in a new set of cookware.

Our home economist, Fiona Mair, reviewed a range of induction saucepans. Her advice is to consider your style of cooking and keep in mind that each cooktop will respond differently to your cookware. A pan might make noise (see opposite) on one cooktop and not on another, for example, or may heat up

differently. This is difficult to test in a shop, so choose a single pot or pan first to see how it performs on your cooktop before investing in the whole set.

Another option is to buy a few good-quality pots and pans rather than an entire set of induction cookware. This way you can enjoy other features, such as a non-stick frypan, stainless steel stockpot or a cast-iron skillet. You can then add to your collection as your needs change or as new technology develops. Good-quality cookware may cost you more to buy, but it's likely to outlast less-expensive varieties, saving you money in the long run.

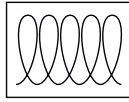
## What's your style?

**F**or **slow and steady cooking**, you'll need a heavier-based pan. These react more slowly to the cooking zone and generally take longer to heat up, but once preheated a lower temperature can be used and the pan will give you even, consistent heating. They're versatile and ideal for cooking delicate foods or meals with a long cooking time. These bases tend to be thicker and made of aluminium (with a steel cap in the base, see above right) or cast iron.



## Covering all bases

Not all induction cookware pieces are created equal, and the difference largely come down to the materials used to construct the base. Cast iron, steel, some enamelled steel and stainless steel pans with an iron base or core are suitable, but glass, aluminium and copper are not. If in doubt, look for the induction-compatible symbol (right) or test them with a magnet.



**Stainless steel** is a popular choice for cookware because it's strong, hard and non-corrosive and generally contains 18% chromium (for rust resistance) and 10% nickel (for acid resistance and a shiny

surface). It's not the best conductor of heat, so it's often combined with aluminium in multi-layered bases. The aluminium is better at conducting and dispersing heat and is encapsulated between layers of stainless steel.

The **Miele KMSK 1615 16cm Saucepan**, **Le Creuset 3-ply 16cm Stainless Steel Saucepan**, **Cuisinart Chef's**



**Ultimate 18cm Covered Saucepan** and **Tefal Jamie Oliver Anodised Induction 18cm Saucepan** are multi-layer stainless steel saucepans with an aluminium core.

**Cast iron** cookware can be pricey to buy, but is very durable if looked after properly. It gives very even heat transfer at low settings, but because of its thick and heavy base (and construction) takes longer to heat up and cool down than other types of cookware. The **Le Creuset Cast Iron Saucepan 16cm** has an enamelled cast iron base that helps stop rust, but if handled roughly this type of cookware can chip and become brittle.

**Aluminium** conducts and retains heat very well, is lightweight and doesn't rust. But aluminium alone is incompatible with induction. Manufacturers overcome this by using a stainless steel plate on the base of an aluminium pan. The plate generates the heat from the induction cooktop and passes it through to the rest of the pan. The **Besemer (induction) 2.2L Saucepan with Lid**, **Scanpan Induction + 18cm/1.7L Saucepan** and **Circulon Steel Elite 18cm/2.8L Saucepan** are all aluminium saucepans that have a steel plate on their bases. These pans have the thickest base of the group we reviewed, which helps them distribute heat evenly once preheated. We also noticed these pans make no noise during cooking.

## WHAT'S THAT NOISE?

For the most part, induction cooking is a noiseless process. But in our last test of induction cooktops (see *CHOICE*, Sep 13) we noted some operating noises. You might hear buzzing when using a high setting, the cooling fan might cause a whirring or hissing sound, and clicking noises could be caused by electronic switching to maintain a set temperature.

Sometimes the sounds produced come from the cookware used. We found the multi-layered bases of the Cuisinart, Le Creuset (stainless steel), Miele and Tefal produce cracking, whistling or buzzing sounds, while the heavier-based pans are quiet.

If the middle layer is only encapsulated in the steel – as opposed to being welded within it – it can move about. The movements are microscopic, but can give rise to the noise. You won't notice this noise on a ceramic or gas cooktop, but the high frequency of induction's magnetic field can cause a noise which, though not loud, can be quite annoying. ■

Look for: Circulon (1), Scanpan (2), Le Creuset (3, cast iron) and Besemer (4) induction-compatible cookware.

For **fast cooking**, stainless steel-layered bases heat up quickly and react quickly to changes in the temperature

setting, so you may need to change the settings more frequently. These pans tend to have a thinner base, and if you don't monitor the food frequently, it could be

more prone to burning, overcooking and sticking if it's not a non-stick pan. These pans are ideal for boiling water for pasta, stocks, soups and steaming.

Look for: Le Creuset (5, stainless steel), Tefal (6), Miele (7) and Cuisinart (8) induction-compatible cookware.





# Easy rider

An electric bike can make all the difference between enjoyment and a sweaty mess, finds **Matthew Steen**

## Nutshell

- 23 electric bicycles and two conversion kits tested by Bicycle Network's *RideOn* magazine, ranging in price from \$1050 to \$3299.
- Reasons for using electric bicycles range widely.

**T**here are quite a few reasons you may prefer an electric bicycle to a purely pedal-powered model.

- You don't want to cycle as hard, as your workplace doesn't have shower facilities.
- You're recovering from an injury.
- You want to be able to take off more easily from an intersection.
- You want to keep up with other cyclists.
- You live in a hilly area.

Electric bikes assist your pedalling as you ride, cutting in when your speed drops below a certain level. You won't get pedal assist beyond about 27.5km/h. Some have a throttle, so you don't have to pedal, while others have both throttle and pedal assist.

## Costs & limitations

They're expensive, ranging from \$1050 for a conversion kit for your existing bike to more than \$3000 for a ready-made cycle with all the trimmings such as lights, racks and panniers.

And there are other limitations. Going electric means adding weight to your ride – up to 25kg for a ready-made model. Also, they only get you so far before needing a recharge. One bike claims a limit of 40km, while another claims up to a more impressive 100km. Most give a broad claim because it depends on a number of variables, such as whether you use the throttle and the topography of the area. Typical recharge time is four to six hours.

## How do they run?

All the bikes on test have battery packs with nine to 14Ah capacity, and voltage from 24 to 36V. Their motors range from 200 to 250W. You can expect the batteries to last for about 500 charges, and replacements cost between \$395 and \$550. If you only charge partially, this won't count as a full recharge – check your manual for proper battery charge maintenance.

## How *RideOn* tests

**Functionality** How well does the product do what it's supposed to do, including ease of set-up, operation, useability and maintenance?

**Quality** How is the product put together and what's the longevity of construction?

**Price** Is the product worth the price?

**Appearance** How does it look?

For more on how *RideOn* tests electric bicycle and conversion kits, go to [choice.com.au/ebikes](http://choice.com.au/ebikes)

|                                              | Price (\$) | PERFORMANCE<br>Overall score (out of 100) |
|----------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Gazelle</b> Orange Plus Innergy XT (2013) | 3299       | 96                                        |
| <b>eZee</b> Forza                            | 2449       | 93                                        |
| <b>eZee</b> Street                           | 2399       | 93                                        |
| <b>Ordica</b> Classic                        | 1799       | 92                                        |
| <b>eZee</b> Torq Alfine                      | 3249       | 91.5                                      |
| <b>BH</b> Easy Motion Neo City               | 2449       | 91                                        |
| <b>Pro Movec</b> Element Lux                 | 2449       | 91                                        |
| <b>BionX</b> Conversion Kit                  | 1984       | 90                                        |
| <b>eZee</b> Sprint                           | 2449       | 90                                        |
| <b>Gazelle</b> Balance Innergy (2013)        | 3195       | 90                                        |
| <b>Power Ped</b> Legato/Maestro 3-speed      | 1995       | 90                                        |
| <b>BH</b> Easy Motion Neo Cross              | 2499       | 88                                        |
| <b>BH</b> Easy Motion Neo Race               | 2799       | 88                                        |
| <b>Solarbike</b> Swift Conversion kit        | 1050       | 88                                        |
| <b>Dahon</b> Bullet Ezee                     | 2049       | 87                                        |
| <b>Nuibike</b> Super-light                   | 1950       | 85                                        |
| <b>Power Ped</b> Sonata                      | 1950       | 85                                        |
| <b>BH</b> Easy Motion Neo Jumper             | 3299       | 84.5                                      |
| <b>eZee</b> Quando                           | 2000       | 83.5                                      |
| <b>Power Ped</b> Mantis Li14                 | 1995       | 82                                        |
| <b>Pedego</b> Commuter                       | 2695       | 78                                        |
| <b>Hirun</b> Tango                           | 1557       | 74                                        |
| <b>Pedego</b> Cruiser                        | 2295       | 74                                        |
| <b>Envi</b> Mountain                         | 2490       | 72                                        |
| <b>Italwin</b> Tricicletta                   | 2799       | 66                                        |

**USING THE TABLE Scores** The overall score is the sum of functionality,



## WHAT TO BUY

We recommend the highest-scoring model from each category of bicycle / kit.

### READY-MADE



**96%**  
**Gazelle Orange Plus**  
**Innergy XT (2013)**

#### Good points

- Simplest, most user-friendly of all e-bikes tested
- Well constructed and accessorised with Shimano Nexus 7 hub gear
- Puncture-resistant tyres

#### Bad points

- Single button for assistance levels, but only three levels to scroll through
- Comparatively expensive
- Pedal assistance only

### CONVERSION KIT



**90%**  
**BionX Conversion Kit**

#### Good points

- Powerful and easy to control via good, clear display
- Four levels of assistance and regenerative braking
- Pedal or throttle assist options

#### Bad points

- Regenerative braking is really only useful for long descents
- Requires installation by dealer (\$100-150)

### FOLDING



**87%**  
**Dahon Bullet eZee**

#### Good points

- Has both pedal and throttle assist
- Shimano six-speed rear derailleur with Revoshift twist grip

#### Bad points

- No puncture-resistant tyres ■

IMAGES: GAZELLE / SHUTTERSTOCK

|                              |                        |                        |                           | FEATURES                  |                              | SPECIFICATIONS |             |              |                          |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Functionality<br>(out of 40) | Quality<br>(out of 40) | Pricing<br>(out of 10) | Appearance<br>(out of 10) | Throttle/<br>pedal assist | Puncture-<br>resistant tyres | Battery        | Motor       | Type         | Contact                  |
| 39                           | 38                     | 9                      | 10                        | P                         | ✓                            | 36V 9Ah        | 250W        | Bike         | gazellebicycles.com.au   |
| 38                           | 40                     | 9                      | 6                         | B                         | ✓                            | 36V 11Ah       | 200W        | Bike         | glowwormbicycles.com.au  |
| 37                           | 40                     | 8                      | 8                         | B                         | ✓                            | 36V 11Ah       | 200W        | Bike         | glowwormbicycles.com.au  |
| 37                           | 36                     | 10                     | 9                         | P                         | ✓                            | 36V 11Ah       | 250W        | Bike         | ordica.co                |
| 38                           | 40                     | 7.5                    | 6                         | B                         | ✓                            | 36V 11Ah       | 200W        | Bike         | glowwormbicycles.com.au  |
| 36                           | 36                     | 9                      | 10                        | P                         |                              | 36V 9Ah        | 250W        | Bike         | jetblackproducts.com     |
| 36                           | 36                     | 9                      | 10                        | T                         |                              | 36V 11Ah       | 200W        | Bike         | mrebikes.com.au/promovec |
| 36                           | 38                     | 7                      | 9                         | P/B                       | na                           | 36V 9Ah        | 250W / 200W | Conversion   | ridebionx.com.au         |
| 36                           | 40                     | 8                      | 6                         | B                         | ✓                            | 36V 11Ah       | 200W        | Bike         | glowwormbicycles.com.au  |
| 36                           | 38                     | 7                      | 9                         | P                         | ✓                            | 36V 9Ah        | 250W        | Bike         | gazellebicycles.com.au   |
| 36                           | 36                     | 9                      | 9                         | P                         |                              | 36V 11Ah       | 250W        | Bike         | currietechnology.com.au  |
| 34                           | 36                     | 8                      | 10                        | B                         | ✓                            | 36V 9Ah        | 250W        | Bike         | jetblackproducts.com     |
| 34                           | 36                     | 8                      | 10                        | B                         |                              | 36V 9Ah        | 250W        | Bike         | jetblackproducts.com     |
| 36                           | 36                     | 8                      | 8                         | T                         | na                           | 36V 9Ah        | 200W        | Conversion   | solarbike.com.au         |
| 35                           | 36                     | 9                      | 7                         | B                         |                              | 36V 11Ah       | 200W        | Folding bike | glowwormbicycles.com.au  |
| 34                           | 35                     | 8                      | 8                         | P/T                       |                              | 36V 9Ah        | 250W / 200W | Bike         | nuibike.com.au           |
| 34                           | 34                     | 8                      | 9                         | P                         |                              | 24V 9Ah        | 200W        | Folding bike | currietechnology.com.au  |
| 34                           | 34                     | 6.5                    | 10                        | P                         |                              | 36V 9Ah        | 350W        | Bike         | jetblackproducts.com     |
| 32                           | 38                     | 7.5                    | 6                         | B                         | ✓                            | 36V 11Ah       | 200W        | Folding bike | glowwormbicycles.com.au  |
| 32                           | 34                     | 8                      | 8                         | B                         |                              | 36V 14Ah       | 200W        | Bike         | currietechnology.com.au  |
| 31                           | 31                     | 8                      | 8                         | P                         |                              | 36V 10Ah       | 250W        | Bike         | pedegoaustralia.com      |
| 30                           | 32                     | 6                      | 6                         | B                         | ns                           | 36V 9Ah        | 200W        | Bike         | nuibike.com.au           |
| 29                           | 28                     | 8                      | 9                         | P                         |                              | 36V 10Ah       | 250W        | Bike         | pedegoaustralia.com      |
| 28                           | 28                     | 7                      | 9                         | B                         |                              | 36V 10Ah       | 200W        | Bike         | envimotion.com.au        |
| 26                           | 26                     | 6                      | 8                         | T                         |                              | 36V 9Ah        | 200W        | Tricycle     | dolomiti.net.au          |

quality, price and appearance. **TABLE NOTES** P Pedal only. T Throttle only. B Both. na Not applicable. ns Not stated.

# Admiring your handiwork

**Matthew Steen** comes clean on which manual dishwashing liquids are worth buying and why

**M**ore than half of all Australian households have a dishwasher (see *CHOICE*, Oct 13).

But that still leaves a substantial number of us who use washing-up liquid detergents.

One conclusion we've drawn from testing these products is that concentrates matter. A majority of those that claim to be concentrated clearly perform better. The only trade-off is that, based on the size of

the packs we bought, concentrated liquids are generally more expensive than others (see table, right).

Our value score is based on the number of plates washed versus price (this is only a reflection of what we paid on the day we bought the liquids on test) and volume. The only price that really matters is what you pay on the day you buy – ideally when there's a special on one of our recommended products (page 62).



## Nutshell

- We test 28 washing-up liquids, covering most of the Australian market.
- Concentrates perform better than the other liquids – but you'll pay for the privilege.

|                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fairy</b> Platinum Lemon                                          |
| <b>Fairy</b> Lemon                                                   |
| <b>Morning Fresh</b> Super Concentrate Power Soaker                  |
| <b>Palmolive</b> Sensitive Hypoallergenic                            |
| <b>Palmolive</b> Lemon Lime Ultra Concentrate                        |
| <b>Morning Fresh</b> Super Concentrate Lemon Fresh                   |
| <b>Palmolive</b> Divine Blends Vanilla & Berries Ultra Concentrate   |
| <b>Morning Fresh</b> All in 1 Gel Sparkling Fresh Advanced Formula   |
| <b>Woolworths Select</b> Shine Antibacterial Concentrate             |
| <b>Woolworths Select</b> Shine Lavender Concentrate with Baking Soda |
| <b>Green Action</b> Peppermint (Aldi)                                |
| <b>Earth Choice</b> Green Tea & Lime Concentrate                     |
| <b>Blast</b> Ultra Plus Antibacterial Concentrate                    |
| <b>Blast</b> Ultra Plus Red Apple Concentrate                        |
| <b>Coles</b> Ultra Lemon Fresh                                       |
| <b>Palmolive</b> Original                                            |
| <b>Coles</b> Ultra Antibacterial Orange with Tea-Tree                |
| <b>Tandil</b> Ultra Lemon & Lime (Aldi)                              |
| <b>Tandil</b> Super Strength Lemon Fresh (Aldi)                      |
| <b>Eco Store</b> Lemon                                               |
| <b>Spree</b> Multi Action Lemon                                      |
| <b>Woolworths</b> Homebrand Concentrated Lemon                       |
| <b>Coles</b> Dishwashing Liquid Super Strength Lemon                 |
| <b>Woolworths</b> Homebrand Lemon                                    |
| <b>Earth Choice</b> Lemon Fresh                                      |
| <b>Trix</b> Antibacterial Lemon                                      |
| <b>Unamat</b> (Aldi)                                                 |
| <b>Coles</b> Smart Buy                                               |

## HOW WE TEST

**Performance** Using 4mL of each washing-up liquid in a 5L basin, we wash plates pre-soiled with oils and foodstuffs at timed intervals until the foam in the basin disappears completely. Each product is tested three times. The performance score is based on the number of plates washed before the foam disappears.

The **value score** is unweighted and indicative only – we don't use it as a basis for our recommendations.

# 2.6

Number of people in an average Australian household

# 12L

Daily use of water in a kitchen sink per person

# 31.2L

Average daily household water use in a kitchen sink

IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK

## USING THE TABLE

**Price** This is the price we paid, in September 2013, at a national retailer for the pack size listed.

**Performance score** is made up of the number of plates cleaned before the foam dissolves completely. The **value score** is based on the pack size, which varies with many products. We include it so you have a frame of reference for the value of the product given its pack size. We also include the number of plates washed so you can work out the value for different pack sizes.

**TABLE NOTES** ns Not stated. Most products come in different pack sizes and/or fragrances. These factors don't affect performance. ▶



| COSTS      |                | PERFORMANCE           |                 |                       | CLAIMS & SPECIFICATIONS |                 |                                               |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         |                   |                          |  |
|------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Price (\$) | Pack size (mL) | Performance score (%) | Value score (%) | Plates washed by pack | Concentrate             | Gentle on hands | Surfactants biodegradable according to AS4351 | Greywater safe | Safe for septic tanks | Cruelty free | Kosher certified | Phosphate free | Plant-based ingredients | Recyclable bottle | Contact                  |  |
| 4.99       | 433            | 96                    | 74              | 5160                  |                         |                 |                                               |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | fairydish.com.au         |  |
| 3.00       | 433            | 84                    | 83              | 4510                  |                         |                 |                                               |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | fairydish.com.au         |  |
| 6.28       | 450            | 83                    | 62              | 4613                  | ✓                       |                 |                                               |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 2             | morningfresh.com.au      |  |
| 2.99       | 375            | 78                    | 78              | 3625                  | ✓                       | ✓               | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | colgate.com.au           |  |
| 3.49       | 400            | 76                    | 75              | 3767                  | ✓                       | ✓               | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | colgate.com.au           |  |
| 3.95       | 450            | 72                    | 73              | 4013                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 2             | morningfresh.com.au      |  |
| 4.99       | 700            | 72                    | 79              | 6242                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | colgate.com.au           |  |
| 3.95       | 400            | 70                    | 68              | 3433                  | ✓                       | ✓               | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | morningfresh.com.au      |  |
| 1.50       | 500            | 66                    | 92              | 4042                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              |                         | PET 1             | woolworths.com.au        |  |
| 1.50       | 500            | 65                    | 92              | 4000                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              |                         | PET 1             | woolworths.com.au        |  |
| 2.99       | 600            | 64                    | 84              | 4750                  |                         |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              | ✓                       | PET 1             | aldi.com.au              |  |
| 2.99       | 500            | 63                    | 80              | 3875                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             | ✓              |                       | ✓            | ✓                |                | ✓                       | PET 1             | naturesorganics.com.au   |  |
| 1.99       | 400            | 62                    | 84              | 3067                  | ✓                       | ✓               | ✓                                             |                |                       | ✓            | ✓                |                |                         | PET 1             | naturesorganics.com.au   |  |
| 1.97       | 400            | 61                    | 83              | 3000                  | ✓                       | ✓               | ✓                                             |                |                       | ✓            | ✓                |                |                         | PET 1             | naturesorganics.com.au   |  |
| 2.00       | 450            | 56                    | 83              | 3075                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              |                         | PET 2             | coles.com.au             |  |
| 2.69       | 500            | 56                    | 79              | 3417                  |                         | ✓               | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | colgate.com.au           |  |
| 2.00       | 450            | 53                    | 82              | 2925                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              | ✓                       | PET 1             | coles.com.au             |  |
| 1.79       | 450            | 50                    | 83              | 2738                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              |                         | PET 2             | aldi.com.au              |  |
| 2.99       | 1000           | 45                    | 87              | 5500                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              |                         | PET 2             | aldi.com.au              |  |
| 3.29       | 500            | 42                    | 65              | 2583                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                | ✓                     | ✓            |                  |                | ✓                       | PET 2             | ecostoreaustralia.com.au |  |
| 2.76       | 1000           | 36                    | 84              | 4333                  |                         |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 1             | colgate.com.au           |  |
| 0.99       | 250            | 34                    | 74              | 1021                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 2             | woolworths.com.au        |  |
| 1.59       | 1000           | 29                    | 89              | 3500                  | ✓                       |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 2             | coles.com.au             |  |
| 0.99       | 1000           | 27                    | 94              | 3250                  |                         |                 |                                               |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 2             | woolworths.com.au        |  |
| 1.93       | 1000           | 26                    | 84              | 3083                  |                         | ✓               | ✓                                             | ✓              | ✓                     | ✓            | ✓                |                | ✓                       | PET 1             | naturesorganics.com.au   |  |
| 1.79       | 1000           | 26                    | 86              | 3083                  |                         |                 | ✓                                             |                |                       |              |                  | ✓              |                         | PET 2             | pzcussons.com.au         |  |
| 0.99       | 1000           | 24                    | 93              | 2917                  |                         |                 | ✓                                             | ✓              |                       |              |                  | ✓              |                         | PET 2             | aldi.com.au              |  |
| 0.99       | 1000           | 20                    | 91              | 2417                  |                         |                 |                                               |                |                       |              |                  |                |                         | PET 2             | coles.com.au             |  |



## WHAT TO BUY

Our recommended washing-up liquids are all at least good performers overall. Detergents that don't score this well can still perform OK and can cost much less than our recommended products.

(All prices per 100mL)

- 1 **96% Fairy** Platinum Lemon \$1.15
- 2 **84% Fairy** Lemon 69c
- 3 **83% Morning Fresh** Super Concentrate Power Soaker \$1.40
- 4 **78% Palmolive** Sensitive Hypoallergenic 80c
- 5 **76% Palmolive** Lemon Lime Ultra Concentrate 87c
- 6 **72% Morning Fresh** Super Concentrate Lemon Fresh 88c
- 7 **72% Palmolive** Divine Blends Vanilla & Berries Ultra Concentrate 71c
- 8 **70% Morning Fresh** All in 1 Gel Sparkling Fresh Advanced Formula 99c



## Calamity of claims

As with many other consumer goods, washing-up detergents often come with numerous claims. We haven't tested these claims ourselves, so treat them with a grain of salt.

**Concentrated** detergents claim to be able to wash more with less.

**Gentle on hands** Some products, such as those with "hypoallergenic" in the name, specify that they're dermatologically tested. Others just use the phrase "soft on hands" instead.

**Surfactants biodegradable according to AS4351** Sometimes this refers only to one ingredient in a formula (the

surfactant) being biodegradable rather than the full product. Everything else may remain in the environment for a long time.

**Greywater / septic tank safe** Few make this claim, and some that do are generally accompanied with a sodium percentage claim.

**Cruelty free** This refers to the practice of not testing on animals and is applied only to the liquid. It doesn't take account of how ingredients have come to be considered safe for humans. Some products cite accreditation while others just claim "no animal testing".

**Kosher certified** For those who follow the Jewish faith, this claim usually accompanies the required symbol.

**No added phosphorus** This is usually listed as a claim, without indicating the minimum phosphate percentage that normally accompanies laundry detergents.

**Recyclable bottle** A symbol on the bottle identifying the type of recyclable plastic used will be present on the packaging.

**Plant-based ingredients** This may only apply to some ingredients rather than the entire product. ■

# By the numbers

Our CHOICE member family finds configuration makes a big difference with the Kia Rondo

**C**HOICE members Ai and Luke Jerome and their girls Lucy, 3, and Maia, 1, tried out the Kia Rondo for a weekend of domestic duties, plus a little fun at the beach. The car on test is the top-of-the-range 2L petrol variant with six-speed auto transmission and seven seats; a 1.7L diesel engine is also available.

## The Jeromes say

We liked how easy it was to set up and take our kids out from the back. The child seat anchors are easy to locate on the back of the seats, wasting less space than having them in the ceiling. Lucy could access and use the controls, but since it came with a window lock this wasn't a major issue. The kids had enough legroom with the front seats pushed all the way back, but there could've been more. With two child seats installed, there wasn't enough room in the centre for another passenger to sit comfortably. On the plus side, the middle seat of the second row of seats folds forwards for some drinks space for the kids.

There's plenty of boot space for bikes, prams and shopping in the five-seater set-up, but most of this space is lost when the two rear seats are raised to make it a seven-seater. The kids loved the tray tables on the rear of the driver and passenger seats. Bluetooth is easy to set up, and radio controls on the steering wheel are intuitive.

On the downside, the quality of the drive felt as if we were in a maxi cab when the set-



**10.5s**

Acceleration  
to 100km/h

**17.2m**

Braking from  
60km/h

**7.9L  
vs 7.2L**

Fuel usage claim  
vs measured  
per 100km

up was for seven seats. Adults will find it very uncomfortable to be seated in the rear for a long period. We also didn't like the steering wheel, which is slippery without ridges. Also, the stereo sounded tinny.

## CHOICE says

The responsive steering comes in three settings that alter the difficulty in turning the wheel. The transmission works well, although the ride is quite firm – probably due to the wide-diameter, low-profile tyres supplied with the car. Seating comfort is just right – not too firm or too soft.

Engine noise isn't really an issue with standard driving, but becomes one when you put your foot down. Road noise is hardly noticeable on good roads, but there's a bit of tyre rumble on coarse roads. A pleasant interior, although mostly black, makes it a nice place to be for the drive.

There's very little cargo space when in the seven-seater position, but the five-seater allows much more. Visibility is restricted due to the thickness of the A-pillar and the little quarter window.

This version has plenty of features, including an almost full-length sunroof, rear-view camera and GPS, keyless entry and engine start, as well as dual-zone climate control air conditioner. The front seats can be heated or cooled with three settings.

## The verdict

The Rondo is roomy as a five-seater, but you'll need luggage racks if you use it as a seven-seater. Both our member family and tester enjoyed the features of this variant, but our member family didn't particularly like how sluggish it was, and our tester also felt it could've done with more power. ■

MATTHEW STEEN

## KIA RONDO PLATINUM GDI 2.0L PETROL

PRICE \$39,990 (base model from \$29,990)

CONTACT [kia.com.au](http://kia.com.au)

ANCAP RATING 5 star





# BYO tech to school

Which laptop is best for your child's educational needs? **Steve Duncombe** outlines your options

**N**ow that your children will no longer get a free laptop from the government (see below), how do you know what they need? There's enormous variety in the size, specs, price and performance of notebook computers, leaving non-techie adults and kids alike awash in a sea of confusing claims and general uncertainty.

BYOD (bring your own device) and BYOT (bring your own technology) are the new catchcries. The difference is that with BYOD, a school requests a specific computer model that the student must supply. BYOT means that students can choose their own computers. But be careful, as some schools may use the terms interchangeably.

So before rushing out to grab a bargain, check with the school and see what its computer equipment policy is

– BYOD or BYOT. Do they prefer to supply a device and charge you for it? Or is there an option for students to pick their own? And, if so, does the school have any specific guidelines?

As an example, in NSW the Department of Education has released a BYOD/BYOT policy for its 2200 schools (see [bit.ly/detnswtech](http://bit.ly/detnswtech)). The policy recognises that technology changes rapidly and many students already have their own smartphones and computers. It aims to harness this, but puts the onus on school principals to implement the schools' BYOD policy.

## Endless options

If the school lets students bring their own device, check if there is a particular type it caters for. Does the school prefer a specific brand or model range? Windows PC or Mac? Which operating

## GOODBYE, FREE LAPTOPS

**F**unding has run out for the Australian government's Digital Education Revolution (DER) program, which started in 2009 and ended in 2013. The program aimed to provide each public high school student with a laptop across years 9 to 12, along with better facilities and support for schools. This year, however, many schools will ask students to bring their own devices to school, including smartphones, tablets and laptops. That adds to back-to-school costs, so you need to spend wisely. Our guide can help you beat the BYO-tech blues and pick the best model for your child's needs.





system should you get? Laptop or tablet? The differences are significant.

The terms laptop and notebook are generally considered interchangeable in reference to portable computers.

- **Ultraportables** are small, powerful laptops but relatively expensive.
- **Ultrabooks** are a subcategory of ultraportables.
- **Netbooks** are small and cheap, but relatively low performers.
- **Chromebooks** look like a laptop but run only the Chrome OS operating system, not Windows, and require a constant connection to the internet.
- **MacBooks** are Apple's laptops and run OS X. The MacBook Air range is the smallest and least expensive. They can also be configured to run Windows as an optional extra.
- **Hybrids** offer the look and feel of a laptop plus the versatility of a tablet, usually via a removable screen, but are a compromise solution.
- **Tablets** come in Windows, iOS and Android versions. A tablet is generally smaller and lighter – and costs less – than a laptop. They don't usually have a separate physical keyboard, but one can be connected directly or via Bluetooth. Tablets that take an attachable keyboard can be the equivalent of a hybrid. The Windows Surface Pro tablet is a good example, although the keyboard costs extra.

For detailed information on choosing a laptop, see [choice.com.au/laptopguide](http://choice.com.au/laptopguide) ■

## What to look for

**M**any schools – particularly those that had geared up for the DER program – will have focused their resources on supporting Windows computers. New devices will come with the Windows 8 operating system, but you'll need to add the standard Microsoft Office Home and Student productivity package, currently in the 2013 version, for \$169. It includes Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote programs, along with 7GB of SkyDrive cloud storage.

If a school uses Apple laptops, Microsoft Office for Mac Home and Student 2011 will probably be required. Some schools have opted for iPads, which come with Apple's own productivity software iWork (Pages, Numbers, Keynote) and iLife (iPhoto, iMovie, Garageband), but not Microsoft Office.

Like the Surface tablet, an iPad can be made more functional with the addition of a physical keyboard, such as Logitech's Ultralight Keyboard Cover or Folio range ([logitech.com/en-au/tablet-accessories](http://logitech.com/en-au/tablet-accessories)).

Both Microsoft and Apple offer discounted education pricing for students.

## Buying tips

- Check with the school first for its minimum and recommended configurations.
- Set a budget and stick to it. Don't be tempted by expensive components that aren't really necessary.
- Don't skimp on memory (RAM) – 4GB is a good rule of thumb for laptops. Tablets require less.
- Consider buying from smaller retailers or online as well as national chain stores. Some smaller stores may have good deals. Also check out online specials.
- Go with a brand name, if possible, and check service availability, turnaround and warranty terms.
- If shopping in-store, don't be afraid to ask for a deal. You can get a good price if you buy extra accessories and software at the same time.
- Be wary of extended warranties – they offer little extra protection over your standard Australian consumer rights.

## NEED HELP WITH THE COST?

**D**epending on the type of device and the variations of processor, memory (RAM) and storage (HDD or SSD), a take-to-school device can vary quite a bit in cost.

For those who need some help coping with costs, the Schoolkids Bonus, which replaced the Education Tax Refund, aims to help eligible families and students with the education-related costs of primary and secondary school studies. Eligible families and students receive up to \$820 (two instalments of \$410) for each child in secondary school. Half is paid in January and half in July.



# The art of shredding

A paper shredder can help keep your personal details out of the wrong hands, writes **Chris Barnes**

**Y**ou might think your information is of no interest to others. But personal data such as your name, date of birth, bank accounts and credit card numbers can be used to take money from your accounts, make fraudulent transactions that affect your reputation or credit history, or even create a criminal record. This is known as identity theft, and the impact on the victim can be severe.

Fortunately, it only takes a few simple steps and some common sense to secure your personal information. Use up-to-date anti-virus software on your computer and be alert to phoney

emails and websites (phishing), as well as to phone calls or door-knocking from people claiming to represent your bank,

the government or other entities. Don't give your details to anyone you don't know or aren't sure of.

Shredding all documents containing personal data will also help protect you against identity thieves. Documents such as bank statements and tax returns should always be destroyed before you bin them, to keep your details private. A pair of scissors is a cheap but slow solution; for maximum convenience and security, a paper shredder is the way to go.

## Strip-cut or cross-cut?

Strip-cut shredders cut the paper lengthways into long strips, usually 6-7mm wide. Cross-cut and diamond-cut shredders cut it into smaller pieces (in this test, from 11 to 52mm long and 2.7 to 6.9mm wide) and are more secure.

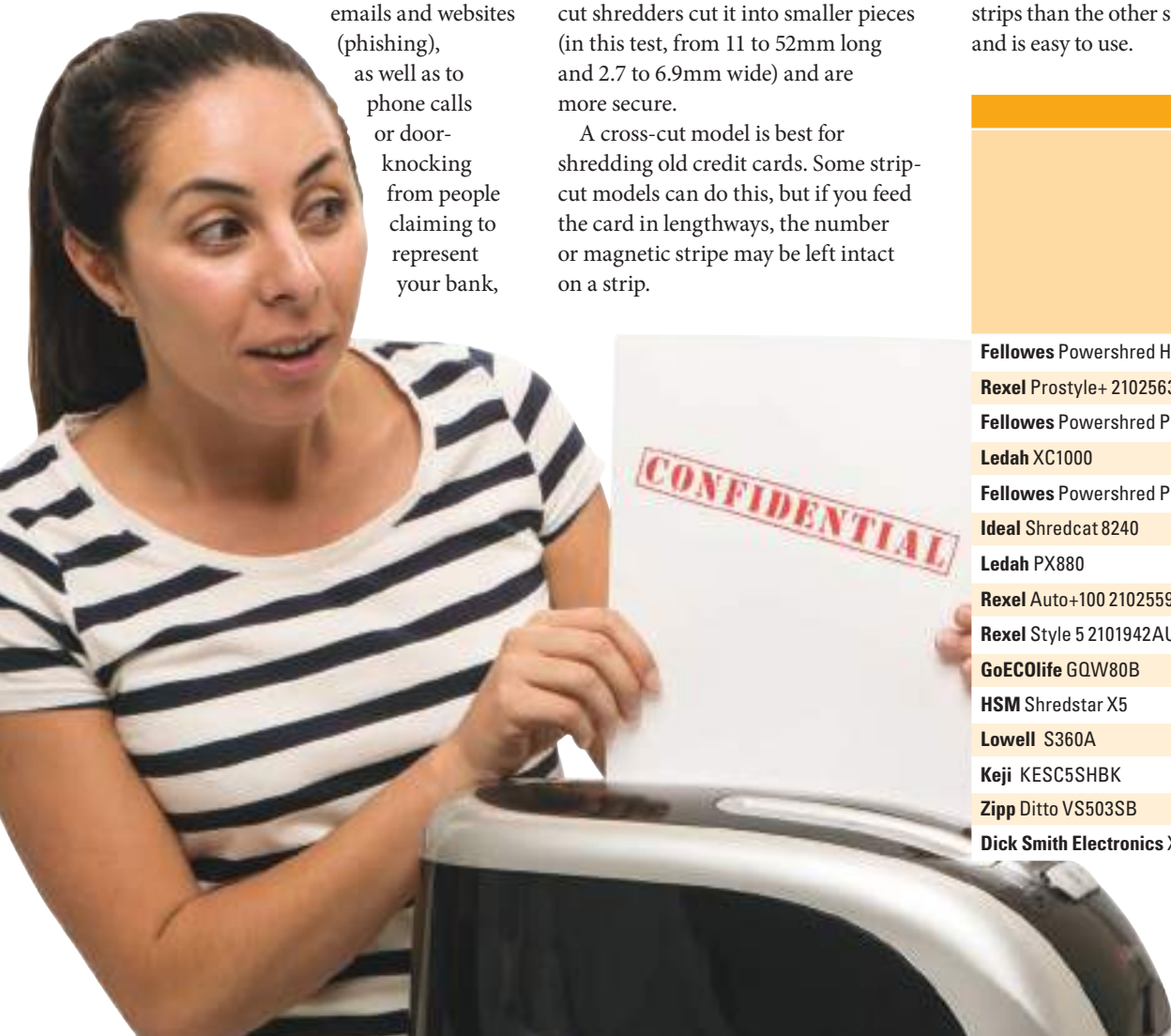
A cross-cut model is best for shredding old credit cards. Some strip-cut models can do this, but if you feed the card in lengthways, the number or magnetic stripe may be left intact on a strip.

## Nutshell

- We review 15 paper shredders, priced from \$20 to \$289, suitable for the home or small office.
- Most are good performers. Three stand out, while the least expensive are also the least impressive.

In this test, cross-cut models generally work better, but the strip-cut Ideal is a good performer. It cuts much narrower strips than the other strip-cut models and is easy to use.

|                               |            | PERFORMANCE       |                       |  |
|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--|
|                               | Price (\$) | Overall score (%) | Performance score (%) |  |
| Fellowes Powershred HD10Cs    | 165        | 82                | 87                    |  |
| Rexel Prostyle+ 2102563AU     | 168        | 82                | 85                    |  |
| Fellowes Powershred P-48C     | 97         | 80                | 88                    |  |
| Ledah XC1000                  | 144        | 78                | 80                    |  |
| Fellowes Powershred P-35C     | 69         | 77                | 78                    |  |
| Ideal Shredcat 8240           | 160        | 76                | 75                    |  |
| Ledah PX880                   | 229        | 76                | 68                    |  |
| Rexel Auto+100 2102559AU      | 289        | 76                | 64                    |  |
| Rexel Style 5 2101942AU       | 69         | 75                | 71                    |  |
| GoEcolife GQW80B              | 219        | 73                | 82                    |  |
| HSM Shredstar X5              | 149        | 72                | 79                    |  |
| Lowell S360A                  | 59         | 72                | 83                    |  |
| Keji KESC5SHBK                | 20         | 70                | 76                    |  |
| Zipp Ditto VS503SB            | 20         | 65                | 70                    |  |
| Dick Smith Electronics XP0678 | 30         | 64                | 79                    |  |



## WHAT TO BUY

### 82% Fellowes Powershred HD10Cs



\$165

#### Good points

- Very fast shredding of up to 10 sheets at a time
- Very easy to feed single and multiple sheets
- Good controls
- Can shred credit cards, staples and small paperclips
- Small cross-cut pieces so the large bin fills slowly

#### Bad points

- None to mention

### 82% Rexel Prostyle+ 2102563AU



\$168

#### Good points

- Very fast shredding of up to 12 sheets at a time
- Excellent controls
- Can shred credit cards and CDs
- Small cross-cut pieces so the large bin fills slowly

#### Bad points

- Doesn't always initiate when fed with a single sheet

### 80% Fellowes Powershred P-48C

Best Buy



\$97

#### Good points

- Very fast shredding of up to eight sheets at a time
- Very easy to feed single and multiple sheets
- Good controls
- Can shred credit cards, staples and paperclips
- Small cross-cut pieces so the large bin fills slowly

#### Bad points

- Relatively heavy head is awkward to remove when emptying the bin ▶



1300 360 655

#### FEATURES & SPECIFICATIONS

| Ease of use score (%) | Type of cut | Size of cut (mm) | Noise while shredding single sheet (dBA) | Max. number of A4 sheets per pass (gsm, paper density) | Time to process 100 sheets (sec) | Operating cycle (min on / min off) | Shred credit cards | Destroy CD | Shred staples | Shred paperclips | Claimed bin volume (L) | Dimensions (cm, H x W x D) | Weight (kg) | Contact               |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 76                    | Cross       | 52 x 4.5         | 82                                       | 10 (70)                                                | 71                               | 3-5 / 20                           | ✓                  | ✓          | ✓ (A)         | ✓                | 22.7                   | 43 x 38 x 30               | 6.7         | fellowes.com.au       |
| 79                    | Cross       | 33 x 4.5         | 78                                       | 12 (80)                                                | 74                               | 3 / 40                             | ✓                  | ✓          |               |                  | 20                     | 42 x 43 x 22.5             | 8.1         | acco.com.au           |
| 71                    | Cross       | 48 x 4.3         | 84                                       | 8 (70)                                                 | 78                               | 3-5 / 15                           | ✓                  |            | ✓             | ✓                | 18                     | 35.5 x 36.5 x 26           | 5.5         | fellowes.com.au       |
| 76                    | Cross       | 30 x 4.3         | 82                                       | 10 (80)                                                | 135                              | 2 / 30                             | ✓                  | ✓          |               |                  | 16                     | 45.5 x 34.5 x 25           | 6.3         | bantex.com.au         |
| 75                    | Cross       | 37 x 4.2         | 79                                       | 5 (70)                                                 | 170                              | 3 / 30                             | ✓                  |            | ✓             | ✓ (A)            | 12                     | 31 x 33.5 x 20             | 3.2         | fellowes.com.au       |
| 76                    | Strip       | 4.1              | 58                                       | 13 (70)                                                | 95                               | 5 / 50                             | ✓                  |            |               |                  | 18                     | 39.5 x 32.5 x 20           | 4.9         | jasco.com.au          |
| 84                    | Cross       | 11 x 2.7         | 69                                       | 8 (80)                                                 | 226                              | 10 / 40                            | ✓                  | ✓          | ✓ (A)         |                  | 18                     | 55.5 x 34.5 x 24           | 10.6        | bantex.com.au         |
| 88                    | Cross       | 34 x 4.3         | 77                                       | 6 (80)                                                 | 249                              | 5 / 30                             | ✓                  |            | ✓ (A)         | ✓                | 26                     | 43.5 x 44.5 x 31           | 10.9        | acco.com.au           |
| 79                    | Cross       | 35 x 4.3         | 76                                       | 5 (80)                                                 | 248                              | 3 / 30                             | ✓                  |            |               |                  | 7.5                    | 32 x 36.5 x 18.5           | 3.9         | acco.com.au           |
| 63                    | Diamond     | 45 x 6.9         | 71                                       | 8 (70)                                                 | 128                              | ns / 30-60                         | ✓                  |            |               |                  | ns                     | 36.5 x 29.5 x 29           | 4.4         | pelikanartline.com.au |
| 64                    | Cross       | 39 x 4.1         | 77                                       | 5 (80)                                                 | 180                              | ns / ns                            |                    |            |               |                  | 16                     | 40 x 33 x 20.5             | 3.7         | mastershred.com.au    |
| 61                    | Cross       | 42 x 4.3         | 82                                       | 7 (80)                                                 | 122                              | 2 / 40                             | ✓                  |            | ✓             |                  | 13                     | 33 x 31 x 19               | 3.4         | officeworks.com.au    |
| 63                    | Strip       | 7.2              | 78                                       | 5 (80)                                                 | 118                              | 2 / 45                             |                    |            |               |                  | 9                      | 27.5 x 31 x 15             | 1.3         | officeworks.com.au    |
| 61                    | Strip       | 7                | 82                                       | 5 (80)                                                 | 104                              | ns / ns                            |                    |            |               |                  | 7                      | 24 x 31 x 12               | 1.3         | bigw.com.au           |
| 48                    | Strip       | 6.3              | 79                                       | 6 (80)                                                 | 75                               | 2 / 10                             |                    |            |               |                  | 11                     | 33 x 28 x 15               | 1.6         | dicksmith.com.au      |

**USING THE TABLE** Price we paid in October 2013.  
**Scores** The overall score is made up of performance and ease of use, weighted equally. **TABLE NOTES (A)** Small staples/paperclips only. **ns** Not stated.



## ABOUT THE REST

Most of the other shredders are good overall, but are generally slower than the recommended models (particularly when shredding a batch of 100 sheets) or less user-friendly due to being a bit tricky to feed with paper or having unintuitive controls. The **Dick Smith Electronics** is the least easy to use – single sheets often require several “prods” to initiate, while batches of sheets must be well collated or jams result. At one point

our tester fed it a stack of five slightly splayed sheets, and the shredder jammed so badly we couldn't get it working again!

For more on identity theft and other scams, search for “scams” on [choice.com.au](http://choice.com.au) or visit [scamwatch.gov.au](http://scamwatch.gov.au)

## HOW WE TEST

Our tester, James Thomson, rates the shredders for their performance and ease of use.

**Performance** is made up of the following tests:

- Shredding a single A4 sheet (scored on time taken and quality and size of cut).
- Shredding 100 A4 sheets (in batches of the maximum number allowed at one time, scored on time taken).
- He also assesses the shredders' ability to shred credit cards, CDs, staples and paperclips, where the model claims to shred these. This is commented on but not scored, as not all models can handle these.

**Ease of use** is made up of:

- Ease of using controls.
- Ease of emptying bin.

- Ease of feeding paper into the shredder (including tendency to jam and ease of clearing jams).

- Stability.

**Safety** We use probes to see whether the blades are accessible to a child's fingers. No model on test has accessible blades. We also note models with an automatic feed (which grabs and shreds paper as it's put into the feed slot), as this may be a hazard if hair or clothing is accidentally caught.



## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

**Safety** The blades should not be accessible, especially to the small fingers of a child or to a pet. All the tested models passed this safety check. Some shredders, such as the Fellowes Powershred HD10Cs, automatically stop when fingers touch the feed slot. Automatic feed could be a hazard if hair or clothing gets caught, so make sure there's an obvious stop or off button. Turn shredders off at the power point when not in use.

**Controls** should be easy to use and well labelled. A reverse function can help to free paper jams.

**Security level** of a paper shredder is based on the size of the cut pieces it produces – the smaller the piece, the higher the security level. Generally, strip-cut models are levels one to three and cross-cut models are levels three to five. Any shredding is better than none, but for good security aim for a security level of three or above. Standard definitions vary, but as a guide, look for strip-cuts of no more than four millimetres wide, or cross-cut pieces less than 320mm<sup>2</sup> and no longer than 80mm. All the cross-cut models on test make small enough pieces. Only five models actually make security-level claims in their instructions or labels; the Ideal claims level two, the HSM and Ledah XC1000 level three and the Ledah PX880 and Lowell level four.

**Operating cycle** shows how long the shredder can be operated before it needs a cool-down period.

**Bin** should be large enough for your needs and easy to remove and empty. ■



# Selfie awareness

Take a leap and a snap with Denis Gallagher

**T**he obsession with selfies (the need to show others you're having a fun/interesting/extreme time) has pushed action cameras to the top of many must-have lists. Latest models include Wi-Fi support for remote control using a smartphone, and a wider array of brackets to strap the camera to virtually anything.

GoPro didn't invent the action camera category, but its Hero product did help bring it to the masses. Contour, makers of the ROAM and +2 models in this test, was recently bought out in 2013 following financial troubles. However, meecosales.com.au is assuring customers that Countour products (popular with trail-riders and skydivers) will continue to be sold. ■

## WHAT TO BUY

**70%**  
GoPro Hero 3+  
(Black Edition)



### Good points

- Best video quality on test for daylight and artificial lighting conditions
- Good low-light video performance
- Large range of mounts to suit different situations, e.g. surfing and trail bike riding
- App available (Apple and Android) to control camera and preview video
- Can record in 4K resolution

### Bad points

- Poor battery life
- Only 40-metre waterproof housing, compared with 60m for previous model

| CALL US TODAY<br><b>choice</b><br>SHOPPER<br>1300 360 655 |                   | PERFORMANCE   |                      |               |                           |             |                 |                        | FEATURES    |                   |             |                            |                       |                  |                  | SPECIFICATIONS           |                             |                                |                  |                             |            |                            |                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Price (\$)                                                | Overall score (%) | VIDEO QUALITY |                      |               | Recording ease of use (%) | Battery (%) | Still photo (%) | Tripod mount on camera | GPS support | Removable battery | HDMI output | Slow-motion recording mode | Wireless link (Wi-Fi) | Monitor included | Microphone input | Maximum frame rate (fps) | Waterproof depth – case (m) | Waterproof depth – no case (m) | Submersible case | Still photo resolution (Mp) | Weight (g) | Dimensions (cm, W x H x D) |                 |
|                                                           |                   | Daylight (%)  | Artificial light (%) | Low light (%) |                           |             |                 |                        |             |                   |             |                            |                       |                  |                  |                          |                             |                                |                  |                             |            |                            |                 |
| GoPro Hero 3+ Black Edition                               | 549               | 70            | 85                   | 74            | 75                        | 33          | 40              | 56                     |             | ✓                 | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     |                  |                  | 60                       | 40                          | na                             | I                | 12                          | 74         | 6 x 4 x 3                  |                 |
| Intova SportHD                                            | 249               | 69            | 79                   | 68            | 60                        | 50          | 87              | 56                     | ✓           |                   |             |                            |                       | ✓                |                  | 30                       | 60                          | na                             | I                | 2                           | 181        | 8.6 x 7.4 x 6              |                 |
| Contour +2                                                | 499               | 68            | 81                   | 65            | 60                        | 93          | 33              | 59                     | ✓           | ✓                 | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     |                  |                  | 30                       | 60                          | na                             | I                | 2                           | 155        | 4 x 6 x 10                 |                 |
| Drift Innovation HD Ghost                                 | 349               | 68            | 83                   | 52            | 53                        | 40          | 100             | 84                     | ✓           |                   | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                | ✓                | 30                       | 60                          | 3                              | 0                | 2                           | 170        | 3.5 x 5.5 x 10.5           |                 |
| Garmin VIRB                                               | 349               | 67            | 72                   | 68            | 75                        | 50          | 47              | 70                     |             |                   | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                | ✓                | 30                       | 50                          | 1                              | 0                | 2                           | 174        | 5.2 x 3.1 x 10.9           |                 |
| Sony HDR-AS30V Action Pack                                | 379               | 65            | 66                   | 55            | 83                        | 33          | 73              | 28                     |             | ✓                 | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                | (A)              | ✓                        | 60                          | 60                             | na               | I                           | 12         | 87                         | 2.5 x 5 x 8     |
| Rollei Bullet 5S                                          | 399               | 64            | 74                   | 72            | 45                        | 55          | 100             | 42                     | ✓           |                   | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                | ✓                | ✓                        | 50                          | 60                             | na               | I                           | 2          | 115                        | 6.5 x 4.5 x 5.5 |
| Contour ROAM2                                             | 269               | 63            | 68                   | 47            | 45                        | 90          | 89              | 56                     | ✓           |                   |             |                            | ✓                     | ✓                |                  |                          | 30                          | 60                             | 1                | 0                           | 2          | 145                        | 4 x 5.5 x 10    |
| JVC GC-XA2 Adixxion                                       | 369               | 62            | 59                   | 68            | 75                        | 50          | 53              | 42                     | ✓           |                   | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                | ✓                |                          | 60                          | 40                             | 5                | 0                           | 8          | 134                        | 5.1 x 5.1 x 7.4 |
| GoPro Hero3+ Silver Edition                               | 439               | 61            | 75                   | 59            | 53                        | 33          | 70              | 56                     |             |                   | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                |                  |                          | 60                          | 40                             | na               | I                           | 2          | 74                         | 6 x 4 x 3       |
| DXG 5G9V HD ironX                                         | 299               | 53            | 59                   | 43            | 60                        | 20          | 73              | 28                     |             |                   | ✓           | ✓                          | ✓                     | ✓                |                  | ✓                        | 30                          | 60                             | na               | I                           | 5          | 85                         | 4.2 x 4.2 x 5.8 |
| Ion AirPro2 WiFi                                          | 349               | 48            | 60                   | 53            | 38                        | 20          | 60              | 42                     | ✓           |                   |             |                            | ✓                     |                  | ✓                | ✓                        | 30                          | na                             | 10               | 0                           | 2          | 146                        | 4 x 4 x 10.8    |

**USING THE TABLE Scores** The overall score is made up of video quality (daylight 35%, low light 30%, artificial light 10%), recording ease of use (10%), battery (10%) and still photo (5%). **Price** Recommended retail, as of December 2013. **TABLE NOTES** All models on test use the H.264 codec and MPEG-4 video format. All use a microSD format removable card to store video except the JVC, which uses a larger SD card, and the Sony, which has the ability to also use an MS micro card. All models support the 4:3 and 16:9 video format, with the Hero 3+ Black Edition also supporting a 17:9 format. All models with Wi-Fi support also allow user control of the camera and previewing through the use of an iOS or Android smartphone app. **(A)** Monitor incorporated into the external housing as part of the action kit option. **na** Not applicable. **I** Included. **O** Optional.





## On the record

A good DVR may be just what you need to organise your TV-viewing regime, says **Denis Gallagher**

**W**ith analog TV officially switched off, many TV owners are now confronted with lots of new shows, which can also lead to stressful decisions. How can I watch *Homeland* if my partner wants to watch the tennis? How am I going to enjoy two of my favourite shows when they're on at the same time?

A digital video recorder (DVR), also known as a personal video recorder (PVR), operates like an old tape-based VCR. However, unlike a VCR, it also allows you also pause and rewind live TV. All DVRs include one or more digital TV tuners, allowing you to record a TV show to an internal hard drive to view at a later date.

All models on test include two digital TV tuners to record a TV show on two different channels at the same time, and a hard drive with either a 500GB or 1TB capacity for storing your TV programs.

An electronic program guide (EPG), available on all DVRs, shows what programs are coming up in the next hour, day or week. Just select the program you want to record using the remote and your DVR will do the rest. While the EPG should show the programs on the TV screen almost immediately, some DVRs take longer than others to

populate the page, with more-frustrating models taking several minutes to reveal upcoming shows.

Most models on test are able to play video, music and images stored on a home network or over the net. Others can stream recorded programs to a smartphone using a dedicated app.

## WHAT TO BUY



**73%**  
**Panasonic**  
**DMR-BWT835GL**

### Good points

- Excellent for recording when using the EPG
- Can stream to iOS or Android devices
- Can schedule recordings remotely using an iOS or Android device
- Can record 3D video from internal HDD to a recordable Blu-ray disc
- Supports ad skipping

### Bad points

- Energy-saving mode not enabled by default and is buried in the menu
- No support for series recording

|                               | COSTS      |                                |                          | PERFORMANCE       |         |                    |                 |                   |                     |                           | FEATURES         |                                   |                                            |                                  |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                               | Price (\$) | Standby energy consumption (%) | Annual running cost (\$) | Overall score (%) | EPG (%) | Remote control (%) | Ease of use (%) | EPG recording (%) | Timer recording (%) | Damaged DVD handling (%)* | Series recording | Can record directly to USB device | Smartphone mobile scheduling app available | Streaming playback app available |
| <b>Panasonic DMR-BWT835GL</b> | 699        | 0 (B)                          | 18                       | 73                | 79      | 71                 | 79              | 91                | 60                  | 36                        |                  | ✓                                 |                                            | ✓                                |
| <b>Panasonic DMR-PWT635GL</b> | 599        | 0 (B)                          | 14.10                    | 73                | 79      | 71                 | 79              | 91                | 60                  | 99                        |                  | ✓                                 |                                            | ✓                                |
| <b>LG HR938T</b>              | 599        | 100                            | 10                       | 72                | 69      | 76                 | 59              | 78                | 70                  | 91                        | ✓                |                                   |                                            | ✓                                |
| <b>Samsung BD-F8900A (A)</b>  | 499        | 80                             | 8.60                     | 69                | 61      | 71                 | 61              | 92                | 65                  | 31                        | ✓                | ✓                                 | (C)                                        | ✓                                |
| <b>Strong SRT6500</b>         | 399        | 60                             | 7.70                     | 64                | 68      | 61                 | 47              | 70                | 75                  | 83                        | ✓                | ✓                                 |                                            | ✓                                |
| <b>Teac HDR9650TS</b>         | 299        | 60                             | 6.80                     | 61                | 62      | 60                 | 50              | 66                | 75                  | na                        | ✓                | ✓                                 |                                            | ✓                                |
| <b>Topfield TRF-7260</b>      | 299        | 0                              | 14.60                    | 61                | 73      | 53                 | 53              | 78                | 65                  | na                        | ✓                |                                   |                                            |                                  |
| <b>Thomson JL8006</b>         | 149        | 40                             | 9                        | 47                | 47      | 59                 | 49              | 30                | 45                  | na                        | ✓                |                                   |                                            |                                  |

**USING THE TABLE** Price Recommended retail, as of January 2014. **Scores** The overall score is made up of EPG (30%), remote control (25%), standby mode. **Annual running cost** is calculated as a running cost based on five hours of use and 19 hours of standby power (at 26c/kWh) identical in features and performance except it has a 500GB internal drive instead of 1TB. **(B)** The Panasonic models are capable of less than only supported on Samsung mobiles that support the "AllShare" app, available on most currently available Samsung smartphones and Android





## 73% Panasonic DMR-PWT635GL

### Good points

- Excellent for recording when using the EPG
- Can stream to iOS or Android devices
- Can schedule recordings remotely using an iOS or Android device
- Supports ad skipping

### Bad points

- Energy-saving mode not enabled by default and is buried in the menu
- No support for series recording



## 72% LG HR938T

### Good points

- Good performance for recording when using the EPG and for timer recording
- Can record live TV to an external USB device
- Excellent energy performance in standby

### Bad points

- No support for ad skipping or auto padding
- No support for series recording

### ABOUT THE REST

The **Samsung** and **Strong** models also play DVDs, Blu-ray discs and music CDs, making them more versatile than the **Teac**, **Topfield** and **Thomson** models as a general home entertainment solution. The Samsung also delivers various smartphone-streaming and remote-scheduling features. However, you need to use an appropriate Samsung smartphone or tablet, unlike the Panasonic, Strong, LG and Teac models, which only require a downloadable app on the Android or iOS device in order to stream to the device from video stored on the DVR.

The Thomson is the only DVR on test without a LAN connection or wireless support. ■

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK

### SPECIFICATIONS

| Ad skipping               | Auto padding                    | Timeshift limit (h) | USB ports | Recordings can be copied for viewing elsewhere | Dimensions (cm, H x W x D) | Weight (kg) | Hard drive capacity (GB) | Optical drive  | Contact          |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1 min FF/10 sec FR        | 1, 3, 5, 10 min start and end   | 1.5                 | 1F, 1R    | BD, DVD, SD, USB                               | 7 x 43 x 25.5              | 3           | 1000                     | 3D BD recorder | panasonic.com.au |
| 1 min FF/10 sec FR        | 1, 3, 5, 10 min start and end   | 1.5                 | 1F, 1R    | SD, USB                                        | 6.5 x 43 x 25              | 2.8         | 1000                     | 3D BD player   | panasonic.com.au |
| No skip (4X FF/FR only)   | –                               | 1.5                 | 1F, 1R    | USB                                            | 6 x 43 x 30.5              | 3.3         | 1000                     | 3D BD player   | lg.com.au        |
| 10 sec FF/FR              | –                               | 6                   | 1F, 1R    | USB                                            | 6 x 43 x 29.5              | 2.7         | 1000                     | 3D BD player   | samsung.com.au   |
| No skip (6X FF/FR only)   | 1~10 min start; 1~30 min stop   | 2                   | 1F        | USB                                            | 6 x 43 x 29                | 2.6         | 500                      | BD player      | strong.com.au    |
| No skip (6X FF/FR only)   | –                               | 2                   | 1F        | USB                                            | 6.5 x 30 x 23              | 1.6         | 500                      | –              | teac.com.au      |
| (10 sec - 3 min) 7X FF/FR | 1~30 min. start; 1~30 min. stop | 5                   | 1R        | –                                              | 7 x 34 x 28                | 2.3         | 500                      | –              | topfield.com.au  |
| No skip (5X FF/FR only)   | –                               | 2                   | 1F        | USB                                            | 6.5 x 36 x 28              | 2.4         | 1000                     | –              | dse.com.au       |

ease of use (15%), EPG recording (15%), timer accuracy (10%) and standby energy (5%). **Standby energy performance** is calculated based on how much energy the DVR uses when in per day. **TABLE NOTES** **FF** Fast forward. **FR** Fast rewind. \* Not part of the overall score. **(A)** Exclusive to Harvey Norman; the Samsung BD-F8500 is readily available at other retailers and 0.2W consumption if three settings are manually changed from their defaults. However, we scored on the default as the lower standby consumption comes at a cost to useability. **(C)** Feature tablets.

### A series-recording feature

locates a show based on the EPG and records the show based on the name, not just a repeated time. This allows the DVR to record the show even if the time changes.





## A cut above

CHOICE member **Sean Wain** puts four oscillating power tools to work to see which makes the cut

**W**e recruited a serious renovator, CHOICE member Sean Wain (left), to test four popular multi-function power tools for us. Ideally, Sean is looking for an easy-to-use and lightweight tool with minimal vibration and a good range of supplied quality accessories. An extensive range of optional accessories is also on his wish list.



## How do they rate?

### Bosch Green PMF-250 (\$149)

**T**his comes with a very good, detailed manual that's easy to follow, as well as a simple quick-start guide. Its unique, easy-to-use lock-in mechanism for attachments makes changing them a breeze – no hex key or other tools are required. There's no kickback on start up, and vibration is minimal on high speed. Noise level is tolerable.

It's excellent for sanding and cutting wood – the side handle helps stabilise when sanding, with a good range of sanding paper grades included. Performance is very good using both suitable blades on the 1mm aluminium, and reasonable on the 3mm variation. But only one (the “wood and metal” blade) does a good job cutting steel. All blades do an excellent job on plastic.

Sean rates this product as very good overall and says he would buy it.

He'd rate it excellent if it came with a square metal cutting blade (this is an optional extra). He thinks the accessory locking mechanism is “fantastic”, appreciates the quality and performance of the attachments, finds the unit lightweight and easy to handle,

and likes that the blades are all labelled for suitable uses. Sean was able to use Makita accessories on this unit but not Ryobi's or Ozito's.

|                                                                  | Price paid (\$)*         | Supplied attachments and accessories                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bosch Green PMF-250</b>                                       | 149                      | 8-14mm depth stop gauge, scraper, plunge cut blade, segment saw blade, saw blade, 1 sanding pad, 6 wood sanding sheets (60, 120, 240 grit), 5 paint sanding sheets, auxiliary handle, carry case, optional accessory list |
| <b>Makita TM3000CX7</b>                                          | 197                      | 1 sanding pad, 9 sanding papers (80, 120, 180 grit), 1 x 28mm plunge cutting saw blade, 1 x 85mm segment saw blade, carry case, accessory box, and hex key on the cord, optional accessory list                           |
| <b>Ozito MFR-250</b>                                             | 75                       | Sanding pad, 15 sanding papers (60, 120 and 240 grit), 1 scraper, 1 triangular rasp, 2 straight blades, 1 semi-circular saw blade, 1 grout removing disc, side handle, hex key, carry case                                |
| <b>Ryobi RMT1801 18V Cordless / RBC18L15 battery and charger</b> | 79 (tool) + 99 (battery) | Flush cut blade, plunge cut blade, sanding pad, 6 sanding papers (60, 80, 120 grit), hex key. Battery pack purchased separately                                                                                           |

**TABLE NOTES** \*Price we paid in October 2013. \*\*No accessories attached; includes cord or battery. (A) Three-year replacement warranty.

### Ozito MFR-250 (\$75)

The Ozito comes with good, clear instructions, and changing accessories is easily done with the supplied hex key. There's some vibration and noise on the lowest speed setting, and a lot on the fastest. It's not too heavy and the side handle provides extra support and control.

It's very good at sanding wood, and 15 sanding papers are supplied. It also comes with a heavy-duty rasp tool.

Three cutting blades are included but weren't adequately labelled (two identical square blades and one circular). The circular saw blade is OK on wood, but although the square blades cut well on high speed it vibrates too much. Both blade types perform very well on 1mm aluminium and 1mm steel. The circular blade is good at cutting 3mm aluminium but the square blades struggle. Both blade types cut plastic easily.

Sean rates this product as good overall. It's good value for money given the number of accessories supplied and the relative low cost. However, the noise and vibration is a problem, so it won't suit someone who uses it frequently.

### Makita TM3000CX7 (\$197)

The instructions are minimal. A supplied hex key is needed for connecting and disconnecting accessories. There's no vibration or kickback on start-up on low speed, but it's very noisy on the higher speeds. Sean says it's a very well-built unit, and he likes the long lead. He rates it as excellent on sanding wood,

but found it heavier than the others on test. He would have liked some 240 grit paper in the box too. Two wood/metal blades are included – square and circular. Sean rates it very good overall at cutting wood – the square blade struggles at low speed but is great at top speed, whereas the circular blade is only OK.

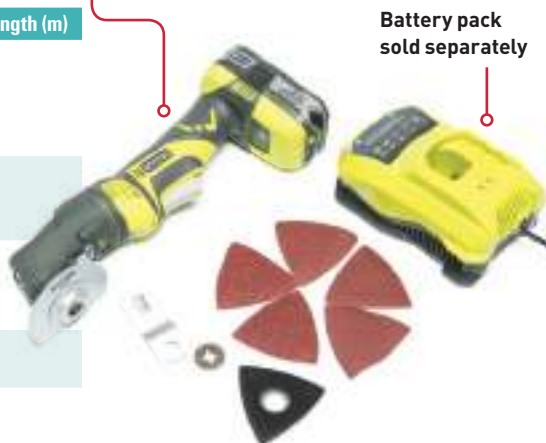
Both blades are "fantastic" on 1mm aluminium, "reasonable" on 3mm aluminium, and good on 1mm steel, and both are excellent for cutting plastic. Sean says the included accessories are limited. It's heavier than the others, and doesn't come with a side handle for support – Sean found it too heavy for continued use. While he says it generally performs well overall and found the blades very good, he's unlikely to buy it.

### Ryobi RMT1801 Cordless (\$79) & RBC18L15 battery and charger (\$99)

The Ryobi's instructions are very minimal – Sean wasn't sure what one of the accessories was for. A hex key is used to connect and disconnect the accessories. The Ryobi is the only cordless model on test, with only one speed, and little vibration. It's easy to hold, and not too noisy. Sanding performance is good, but you need to hold down the trigger to operate it, which is not ideal. Sean would have preferred it if some 240 grit paper had been included. It takes some time to cut through wood using the wood/metal

blade. Using the circular blade on wood results in a poor-quality cut that takes a longer time to execute. This model is poor for cutting aluminium, is only OK on steel, and excellent on plastic.

Overall, Sean says it's a nice-looking unit, but doesn't have the power or speed to undertake most tasks. However, it may be OK for some very small, light-duty jobs. No other branded accessories fit onto this unit. The total cost with battery is just too much, but if you have other Ryobi tools that share the battery, the cost is more reasonable.



Battery pack sold separately

## The verdict

If you frequently DIY, the Bosch is your best option. It performs very well overall and is easy to use. For the infrequent odd job, the Ozito is great value for money. ■

MARTHA PSIROUKIS

| Power (W) | Warranty (years) | Weight (kg)** | Cord length (m) |
|-----------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 250       | 2                | 1.4           | 2.5             |
| 320       | 1                | 2             | 4.9             |
| 250       | 3 (A)            | 1.5           | 2.1             |
| ns        | 2                | 1.4           | na              |

na Not applicable. ns Not stated.



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## Fair warning

We like the proactive approach taken on this label found on Wet & Forget Moss and Mould Remover.



Portable & Keeps All Your Personal Information Secure

## CUTTING EDGE

Sporting five blades and promising to keep all your personal information secure, these scissors are certainly impressive!



## Give & take

Spend more than \$120 to redeem your "complimentary gift". Whoopee.

## HARD WORD

Thanks this month go to Peter Kennedy, John Grimmett, Barry Arnold and Michael Barry. If you have any other examples you'd like to share, send them with your full name to The Hard Word, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville, NSW 2204. Please don't email us your entries – we need the unmarked originals.

To help you get the most out of your wine shopping, **Cellarmasters** here's a complimentary \$20 gift voucher\* (attached). You can redeem this on any wine from Cellarmasters valued at over \$120.

## Out of time

Does the cover on this water mill construction kit really depict tiny dinosaurs roaming Europe during the Middle Ages?

